

THE INDEPENDENT

MONDAY 25 MARCH 1996

40p (IR 45p)

INSIDE TODAY'S NEW-LOOK SECTION TWO

24-PAGE SPORT SECTION

The making of the modern girl

Part 2: Love, sex and relationships

Children and TV: the facts

New Family Life section

The revenge of the nerds

12-page Network pull-out

The crisis in English cricket

A special investigation

The question is not whether we burn cattle, but how many and how soon



Calves destined to be dairy cows, then meat

Photograph: David Sandison

The Government stands on the edge of an abyss in public confidence. This is not just a question of meat to public health, nor the fate of farmers and butchers. The BSE affliction is in danger of contaminating the British body politic.

A completely reliable, accurate account of the dangers posed to human health remains elusive. That, however, does not justify complacency. The risk of catastrophe is sufficiently large to justify bold mobilisation of all the Government's resources.

Consumers are beyond help and reassurance. We need the kind of honesty that accepts what we know is limited but on the basis of what we do know, here is a rescue plan that carries real conviction. This is a time for careful judgment but it is no time for irresolute caution.

THE INDEPENDENT

rural England. Public policy needs to stay ahead, forecasting the need for compensation, incineration, waste disposal. The Government should announce a plan to accomplish two things.

One is longer term. It is for restructuring the food and agricultural businesses. Consumer choice will probably effect radical change during the next few years. Government needs to play its part by, for example, replacing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The other requirement is immediate: it involves removing from the food chain all cattle that may have eaten contaminated feed. If that means slaughtering all cattle that have not been grass-fed throughout their lives, so be it.



Mass slaughter: In previous BSE scares cattle carcasses burnt

Photograph: Pacemaker

Government considers slaughtering up to 4.5 million

PAUL FIELD and JOHN RENTON

The Government yesterday raised the daunting prospect of the slaughter of 4.5 million cattle in a bid to combat the threat of BSE spreading to humans.

The Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg said that the Government was considering the slaughter of older cattle on the advice of scientific advisers that there have been few cases of BSE confirmed in cattle under the age of 30 months.

Speaking on BBC TV's *On the Record*, Mr Hogg said: "A slaughter policy is not excluded. By focusing on 30 months as the advisory committee have done, they are actually focusing on the core of the problem."

The Advisory Committee met in Berkshire over the weekend and produced recommendations which will be given to ministers this morning.

The committee is expected to recommend to the Government that parents with young children should be warned of the dangers of feeding them beef and beef products. It is thought that the scientists' advice could cover children of primary school age.

Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health, and Mr Hogg are likely to make statements in the Commons this afternoon.

On milk supplies: They admitted public confidence in British beef would only be restored once cattle is incinerated but stressed an extensive compensation package would be needed to save their livelihoods.

Supermarkets, reporting a sharp drop in beef sales, are likely to announce later today whether they will follow the example of McDonald's by banning British beef.

The slaughter move came as it emerged that experts are considering the possibility that British sheep may have become infected with "mad cow disease", which has been linked to 10 human cases of the degenerative brain condition Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

SEAC is considering whether to ban sheep offal as well as cattle.

Threat to the beef industry; Europe decides today; Is eating lamb also dangerous? page 2

Official from entering the human food chain, following experiments in which sheep fed with BSE-contaminated material developed the disease.

The European Union agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler is expected to respond in Brussels tonight to a Government request for financial help for 100,000 United Kingdom beef farmers facing ruin.

Mr Hogg said he hoped the EU would provide help: "I shall be looking to the European Union for financial support should we require a great deal of public expenditure." He held talks with the European

chairman of SEAC, further detailed questions at a meeting on Friday. She accepted the committee could not put a figure on how risky eating beef is, but was told that it can judge that some things are riskier than others.

She asked for league tables of relative risk for different ages, different parts of cattle, different kinds of meat, and for a list of beef products ranked in risk order.

She also asked that the committee set out the range of options for Government action in addition to its recommended action. "Then we would be able to see what judgment the Government has made," she said.

Labour favours slaughtering herds with the highest percentages of infected cattle, a move which Mr Hogg described



as another option. Of the 100,000 cattle farmers in Britain one-third have had cases of BSE, which would mean 4 mil-

lion cattle would have to be destroyed.

Farmers warned the proposal would devastate milk supplies because dairy cows which would only have started producing milk in the last six months would also be destroyed. One said: "It is not economically viable. BSE is not transmitted to milk so there is no danger."

Last night a senior vet warned that disposing of cattle carcasses from a mass slaughter would pose a major public health problem. Nick Henderson, a former publisher of *the Veterinary Times*, said pits would have to be dug on farms, the cattle shot with a bolt pistol and the carcasses burnt. "They would have to be destroyed by fire. I cannot think of any other way of disposing of them," he said.

IN BRIEF

Aston Villa take Coca-Cola Cup

Aston Villa beat Leeds United 3-0 in the final of the Coca-Cola Cup at Wembley. Manchester United went three points clear of Newcastle United at the head of the Premier League after a 1-0 win over Tottenham Hotspur. Sport section

Sea Empress dispute

A dispute has broken out between the Government and environmental groups over the inquiry into last month's *Sea Empress* oil spill. Page 6

Today's weather

Chilly easterly wind and scattered showers, rain in the South-east. Section Two, page 25

BBC faces legal action on Noddy

MARIANNE MACDONALD Media Correspondent

The BBC faces legal action following claims that it has been substantially flouting its rights to Noddy, Enid Blyton's much-loved children's character.

The discovery has come to light following the £13m sale of Darrell Waters - the family company which managed the copyrights to Blyton's work - to the London entertainment complex the Trocadero in January. Lawyers combing through 45 years of licences have been astonished to find that the BBC had apparently been hugely ex-

ceeding its rights to Noddy, Blyton's most famous character.

They claim that not only did it pay a fraction of the real value for the first two Noddy series, but the corporation made the third without the right to do so. They also claim that the BBC has published dozens of Noddy spin-offs in the form of dolls and picture books despite the fact it only has rights to exploit the two Noddy series, not Noddy in general.

Darrell Waters has now been renamed the Enid Blyton Company by the Trocadero, which is "renegotiating" the BBC contracts and demanding "sub-



The BBC made £14m from Noddy and Big Ears last year. Last year BBC Enterprises - now BBC Worldwide - is understood to have made about £14m from Noddy, including foreign sales of the series, while Darrell Waters made £150,000.

Tougher A-level exams planned

JUDITH JUDD Education Editor

Plans for tougher vocational qualifications and more challenging exams at GCSE and A-level will be put forward this week by Sir Ron Dearing, the Government's chief adviser on the curriculum.

His review, which will bring the most fundamental changes to qualifications for 16- to 19-year-olds since the start of A-levels more than 40 years ago, is expected to be accepted in full by Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. She will back proposals to bring in outside checks on vocational qualifications and ensure that their

content is made clearer.

On exams, Sir Ron's report proposes a harder GCSE maths exam for the brightest students, to bridge the gap between GCSE and A-level and university maths.

At A-level, exam boards will be encouraged to offer extra S-level papers to extend the most able pupils. The new exams will be more closely tied to A-levels so they fit better into school timetables. There will be a new intermediate exam, the Advanced Subsidiary, to be taken after a year in the sixth form.

Sixteen-year-olds will be able to embark on four or five subjects before deciding after one year to specialise in two or three for A-level. At present

most students study two or three A-levels for two years.

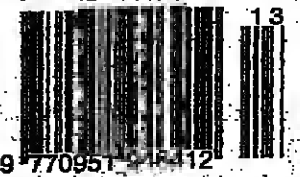
The report envisages that some students will take a mixture of academic and vocational subjects. A national certificate will record both vocational and academic qualifications.

GNVQs, the vocational qualifications which parallel A-levels, will be renamed applied A-levels. Sir Ron is expected to argue that they should be set and tested externally. At present they are set and assessed by students' own teachers.

GNVQs do not have a syllabus but Sir Ron will suggest that the knowledge required for all courses should be specified because of criticisms that the content is too vague.

The report will argue that a small number of disaffected 14-year-olds should start attending further education college courses and work-based training while continuing to attend school. Sir Ron's thinking is in line with Labour Party policy published last week.

Sir Ron's proposals stop well short of a revolution. Students who wish to continue with three traditional A-levels will be able to do so. The report aims to end the impasse in education for 16- to 19-year-olds which has existed since 1988 when the Government turned down plans from the Higginson Committee for all students to take five A-levels. Teachers say the present A-level is too narrow.



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news

Party funding: Rags-to-riches millionaires replacing old money as main source of cash for depleted coffers



Nouveaux riches: Meadowhall developers Paul Sykes and Eddie Healey, and the retail magnate Graham Kirkham

Tories aiming to tap Yorkshire's new rich

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

Desperate to raise enough cash to fight the next general election, the Conservatives are turning towards an unlikely source of revenue: the self-made millionaires of unfashionable, unglamorous Yorkshire.

Party sources estimate a war chest of £11m has been built-up for the next election when it comes - and is being kept separate from other funds, over which the Royal Bank of Scotland, as holder of its £10m-plus overdraft, has first call.

In the past, the party has turned to international wheel-dealers, waving mighty cheque books. That, say party insiders, is still going on. But much of the campaign fund for John Major's Tory party is also coming from this country's homegrown wealth.

Top of that list is Yorkshire's abundance of entrepreneurs, who began at the bottom and hauled themselves to the summit. All of them made their money under a Conservative government. They all know each other, live in style in stately homes dotted around the Yorkshire countryside and are determined to bring the Tories victory at the next election.

They are also well known to Lord Harris, the discount car-

pet king, now the party's chief fund-raiser. Like him, they have backgrounds in retailing, mainly furniture, and property.

Accounts of Stadium City, the private company of Eddie Healey, joint developer, along with another multi-millionaire, Paul Sykes, of the giant Meadowhall shopping centre in Sheffield, reveal a donation to the party of £100,000.

Both Mr Healey, who made his first fortune from MFI, and Mr Sykes were guests at a fund-

raising party held by Lord Harris at his home. When Mr Major needed help, when the party's finances were in even more dire straits, he went to Yorkshire, to see Graham Kirkham, a multi-millionaire who made his money from the DFS discount furniture chain. Mr (now Sir) Graham Kirkham, a miner's son, handed over a cheque for £4m.

Another miner's son is Mr Sykes, who left school at 15, and thanks to a series of brilliant business ventures, culminating in the hugely successful Meadowhall, is now worth £160m.

A die-hard Conservative, Mr

run by old landowners, now there is a new wealth brigade, who started with nothing and have created thousands of jobs. A lot has changed in the last 17 years, there has been a shake-out. A lot of people do believe in giving money to the cause.

The prospect of closer ties with Europe, which Labour would bring, he says, fill him, and his wealthy friends, with horror. "What is the use of being a millionaire in a socialist Britain? In a socialist Europe?" It would be "a disaster", claimed Mr Sykes, not because his own pocket would necessarily suffer but because the

wealth generation process would be harmed.

A close friend of Mr Sykes - they used to live together near Wetherby - is George Moore. Furniture retailing and property were the keys to Mr Moore's £100m fortune. Another friend of Mr Moore said he was "a big supporter of the Conservative party".

The Tories' approach to the land of Geoffrey Boycott and the bulldog spirit, is illustrated by a recent leaked letter from Robert Ogden, a multi-millionaire businessman, inviting like-minded friends to a fund-raising dinner at his home near Wetherby. As disclosed in the *Independent on Sunday*, Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, asked Mr Ogden to hold the gathering. It would be "an occasion for prominent businessmen in our area to discuss the conduct of the campaign and to enlist their financial support".

Guest of honour at the dinner was Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health. Follower of Britain's wealthy, Dr Philip Beresford, said yesterday that the Tories' strategy was understandable. "These people are more appealing to the modern Tory party than the old, landowning class. They have ready cash, a dynamic 'can do' image and are wealth, and job, creators."

'What's the use of being a millionaire in a socialist Britain?'

raising party held by Lord Harris at his home.

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A die-hard Conservative, Mr

Blind actor to play Oedipus

JOHN MCKIE

It is one of the most celebrated roles in theatre. Gielgud and Olivier have played him, the character has spawned three films, an opera by Stravinsky, and new interpretations from Jean Cocteau, Peter Brook and Simon Callow.

And now, for what is thought to be the first time, an actor with a natural aptitude for the part, is playing him.

John Wilson Goddard is believed to be the first ever blind actor to play Oedipus, who is blinded in Sophocles' Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, in a major production when he appears in Jonathan Neale's new play *Oedipus Needs Help* next month.

Goddard, 45, is unsurprisingly that he seems to be the first blind actor to play the most famous "character" in Greek tragedy. "The onus is on casting directors, or anyone else, to find out how we work, and it's not something people are fully aware of. The number of disabled actors is very small, and is still growing."

After 10 years of acting, including TV appearances in *The*

Bill and One Foot in the Grave, Goddard asked Neale to write a part for him 18 months ago. The result is *Oedipus Needs Help*, which has a short spell at Brighton's Pavilion Theatre from 10 April, before opening at the Diorama Arts Centre, a new theatre in London's West End on Wednesday 17 April.

Goddard, who was an English teacher, a counsellor and a carpenter before he became an actor, asked Neale to write the play when he was short of work.

Neale, who has written 10 plays, hopes the first blind Oedipus will open doors for disabled actors. Oscar-winning performances of able-bodied actors Al Pacino and Daniel Day-Lewis in disabled roles has drawn attention to the lack of roles being offered to disabled actors.

"I think it was a mistake not giving these roles to disabled actors," said Neale. "We are moving to a situation where black men are allowed to play all kinds of parts, and not just Othello. It's very rare that parts come up for disabled actors to do and I think they should get them."

Schoolgirl, 12, has baby boy

A schoolgirl from the Midlands has become Britain's youngest mother after giving birth to a baby boy just days after her twelfth birthday.

It is believed the girl gave birth in her home town of Wolverhampton in the West Midlands after becoming pregnant at the age of 11.

Reports suggested that the girl had given birth at Wolverhampton's New Cross Hospital, but a spokesman for the hospital insisted that it had no knowledge or records of the girl or the birth.

The baby's father, who is believed to be just 14, visited both mother and baby after the girl gave birth last month. The mother and her baby are said to be in good health.

The revelation comes just days after a 12-year-old girl gave birth to a baby in Swansea, South Wales.

News of the birth of the younger girl's child came to light after an unknown caller phoned the Blenheim Trust, an organisation which helps young girls in the Wolverhampton area, asking for help with a pregnant young girl.

Speaking to her local newspaper Mary Harding, who runs the trust, said: "We received a call from someone asking for help for a 12-year-old who had given birth."

"But as we are only able to deal with girls aged between 16 and 18 we couldn't help her directly."

She added: "Under-age pregnancies have become more frequent and the situation is quite alarming."

David Nolan, of the Birth Control Unit, insisted that this birth again highlighted the need for more education on contraception for young children.

He said: "This is extremely rare - you can count the number of 12-year-old births each year on the fingers of one hand."

"Childbirth is always a risky thing but at that age the risks are even greater."

"This shows that more money needs to be spent on promoting contraception and advice for young people."

He added: "Parents and teachers have to judge when the time is right to give out this advice but they must realise this information is vital."

BBC issues new taste rules

PAUL FIELD

Television viewers can expect less sex, violence, blasphemy and bad language under new BBC guidelines due to be announced in the summer.

Amid growing concern about standards of taste and decency, BBC governors are drawing up rules intended to ensure that the 9pm watershed is observed more vigorously.

Programme makers will be expected to examine the portrayal of violence and the use of stereotypes in comedy shows. The corporation also aims to give clearer guidance on scheduling on television and radio which could result in explicit sex scenes in drama such as *The Buddha of Suburbia* being shown late at night or excluded altogether. It will undoubtedly spell the end of four-letter words on *The Archers*.



Marmaduke Hussey: Fizzle

The move comes after the Government ruled out writing into the Broadcasting Bill the introduction of the V-chip, a device which allows parents to block out certain programmes. However, Virginia Bottomley, the Secretary of State for National Heritage, will continue to

explore what the gadget has to offer and is holding a seminar on the issue later this week.

The revision of the taste and decency section of the guidelines to programme makers is one of the last of the last acts of Marmaduke Hussey who retires as BBC chairman after 10 years next Sunday.

He took the lead after hearing the views of the 125 delegates at a seminar held by the BBC Board of Governors last November. They included religious leaders, writers, academics, broadcasters and representatives from bodies such as the Broadcasting Standards Council, the Broadcasting Complaints Commission and the National Viewers and Listeners' Association.

He told them: "We are now broadcasting to a fragmented audience with very different views about what constitutes

good taste and decent behaviour and what is acceptable on television and radio, and their beliefs are changing very fast. The debate is important because we wield a powerful influence over what people see and hear."

In a letter to the delegates, written before the Dumbane massacre and the V-chip debate, Mr Hussey confirmed the new draft guidelines will be finalised by June. He said they will "emphasise the concept of respect as a key issue in determining where the boundaries should lie in issues of taste, sex and language", and added the guidelines would "stress the need for greater care to be taken about the use of bad language and especially religious language".

Since the guidelines were last amended three years ago, Radio 1 in particular has drawn a large number of complaints.



Calling the shots: Robert Ogden, a businessman, who has held a fund-raising dinner

Breast cancer death rates falling

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

Breast cancer death rates in Europe and north America are starting to fall and the effect is most marked for women under 50, according to new research.

Scientists from the Imperial Cancer Research Fund say that in 16 out of 20 countries analysed, there was a levelling off or fall in the overall death rate in recent years after many decades of alarming rises. Increased awareness, earlier and better treatment, and changes in child-bearing patterns may be responsible, the scientists said.

Countries showing a downturn in deaths were generally those with the highest death rates, including the UK and Canada, while countries with the lowest rates, such as Poland and Spain, were those in which the number of deaths has been rising recently.

Carol Hermon and Valerie Beral, who work at the ICRF's Cancer Epidemiology Unit at Oxford University, analysed death rates from 1950 to 1992 in 20 countries in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. Their conclusions, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, suggest that further falls are likely.

Ms Hermon said: "The decline is mainly among the generations of women born after 1920. We really do not know why these favourable trends have been happening, nor why the decline in mortality started in younger women."

The same team last year reported that breast cancer death rates were starting to fall in the UK. Wider use of the drug tamoxifen was thought to be a factor, rather than the NHS breast screening programme, which researchers said had not been in operation long enough to make a significant impact.

Women suffering regular pain and bleeding from endometriosis, a disorder of the womb lining, wait an average of seven years from first symptoms to diagnosis and treatment, a survey has found.

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news

Peace forum: Glimmer of hope from political arm of IRA at its annual conference is marred by doubts over SDLP participation

Sinn Fein takes step towards elections

ALAN MURDOCH
Dublin

Sinn Fein yesterday moved closer to participating in May elections for the proposed Northern Ireland forum, but doubts emerged as to whether the Social Democratic and Labour Party would join in after its deputy leader warned that Unionists may use the forum to delay all-party negotiations.

The Sinn Fein annual conference in Dublin approved an emergency motion from the party's executive giving the leadership the final say on whether to fight the elections.

Sinn Fein's President, Gerry Adams, said his personal preference was to boycott both the elections and the forum they will elect, but argued that "real

world" considerations might make this impractical.

Privately party leaders indicated that a boycott was only considered an option if this also became the policy of the other main nationalist party, the SDLP. Sinn Fein executive member Martin McGuinness said the party should discuss with the SDLP a joint policy of not participating in the elections or the body, which he described as "an embryonic Stormont assembly".

SDLP deputy leader, Seamus Mallon, underlined his party's reservations about the forum. He told Irish radio he was "seriously concerned" that Unionists might use it "as a bolt hole" from which to stall all-party talks when their negotiating tactics failed.

"What we have to date is some detail of the electoral process as announced by the Prime Minister. But there are other matters on which there is no definitive position as yet."

He added: "One of these is the transition from elections to negotiations and that is crucial. The second is the nature and role of this body."

His warning came in the wake of a ferocious attack on Irish nationalists by the Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble. He told a weekend meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council that Irish premier John Bruton, should "close down" the IRA.

If he failed to do this, Mr Trimble argued, John Major should "end the common travel area between the Republic of Ireland and Britain. Control the

land and sea frontier", he urged.

He continued: "Once the Dublin government realises it can no longer export bombs along with its social problems to England, it will become as helpful as a Tory hackbencher in search of a knighthood."

Delegates at the Sinn Fein conference voiced no demands for an early reinstatement of the IRA ceasefire. A senior party figure told the *Independent* the leadership was deeply concerned by what it sees as the Taoiseach's unwillingness to give strong support for nationalist aims.

He said it was also vital for Dublin to rebuild the powerful consensus linking Washington and Dublin with Northern Ireland nationalist parties, seen as crucial in opening the way to the 1994 IRA cessation.



Gerry Adams: Told conference yesterday he preferred a boycott, but acknowledged 'real world' considerations

1

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Rank and file left in confusion over next move

STEPHEN GOODWIN

Delegates' views

Two days of Delphic platform speeches to the Sinn Fein and their did little to dispel what Gerry Adams, the party president, acknowledged was the "understandable confusion and apprehension" among the rank and file over the next steps.

Sinn Fein stood at a crossroads, all agreed. One road was war, and few speakers so much as alluded to this. Almost praying for the peace process to be put "back on the tracks", Marie Moore, from Belfast, said women would be looking at their husbands and sons and "what may be in front of them".

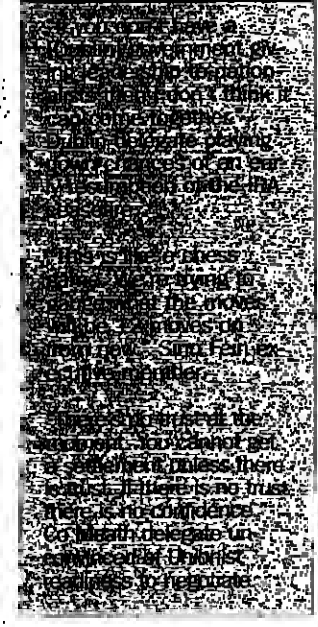
Most of the 800 or so delegates plainly preferred the political road but were angry at the barriers they believe John Major has placed across it. One after another, they declared Sinn Fein had "no fear of elections" but the party was "implacably opposed" to a Unionist-dominated assembly at Stormont.

Echoing the party president yesterday, Martin McGuinness, a leading Sinn Feiner, said: "Our preference is for non-participation in both the elections and the elected body." But he indicated that unless the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party agreed to a joint boycott of the elections, Sinn Fein was ready to participate.

Fra McCann, a councillor from the Lower Falls in Belfast, was cheered when he urged the leadership to make a decision as soon as possible so that the party could maximise its vote.

Paul Cassidy from Westport, Co Mayo, wanted the party to contest the 30 May election on an abstentionist ticket. "We need to be seen not to be afraid of seeking an electoral mandate," he said.

After a lengthy standing ovation, Mr Adams opened his



hour-long address by reminding delegates that they were in the very Rotunda hall where the Irish volunteers were founded in 1913. In 1905, the Rotunda saw the founding of Sinn Fein.

Mr Adams said it was a time for clear heads and steady nerves. "It is my firm conviction that we will get a peace settlement but I cannot say when this will happen or whether indeed it can happen under the present administrations."

He said Mr Major's "elective process" provided more evidence of his concern to stay in power and of the protracted effort to subvert a meaningful restoration of the peace process.

John Major has said that he will move on, and the peace process will move on, without Sinn Fein. John Major knows that the peace process is going nowhere without Sinn Fein.

Ex-minister attacked over vouchers scheme

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

involvement in promoting the idea in government. And this is someone who has no experience of pre-school provision - he is motivated purely by a need to make profit, rather than a desire to provide high quality education for four-year-olds."

A former Conservative education minister was accused by Labour yesterday of seeking to profit from the Government's nursery school voucher scheme by setting up his own private nursery company.

Michael Fallon, who lost his Darlington seat at the last election, has set up a company to take advantage of the demand for new nursery places which will arise from the scheme - which he promoted as a minister. Stephen Byers, Labour's education spokesman, said: "The long-term interests of our children should be put before the short-term profits of Tory former education ministers."

Mr Fallon's company has built a £600,000 nursery for 80 children in Darlington, due to open in September, and has plans to build similar nurseries nationwide. The pilot voucher scheme starts next week in three London boroughs and Norfolk, but the Government has accepted that there will not be enough places for all four-year-olds, whose parents will receive a voucher worth £1,100.

"It looks as though Mr Fallon could just be trying to do a favour for the Conservatives by at least attempting to provide places," said Mr Byers. "But it does raise questions of his in-

Mr Fallon, who is seeking a Tory seat at the next election, said: "This nursery will be registered with Durham County Council. It will be inspected by them regularly, and we are planning an educational curriculum. This isn't just somewhere to drop them [children] off. This is preparing children to go on into primary school."

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Police chief gave evidence for gun dealer

STEVE BOGGAN
Chief Reporter

A senior police officer made a plea for leniency for a suspected gangland gun supplier even though detectives found 27 illegally held weapons, a silencer and 800 rounds of ammunition when they raided his home.

Commander John Allinson, former head of operations at Scotland Yard, retired after the incident, but full details of the dealer's armoury have

remained secret until now. Police correspondence obtained by the *Independent* shows that the 66-year-old man, who was also a Scotland Yard informer, was licensed by Sussex police to hold 12 shotguns, even though he had known links with criminals in London dating back at least 10 years.

When he was arrested in 1994 on suspicion of supplying the gun that killed Donald Urquhart, a millionaire businessman murdered in a contract

killing in London in 1992, detectives found a huge cache of unregistered weapons and ammunition, including deadly solid slug bullets and at least one sawn-off shotgun.

Despite the find, Mr Allinson gave evidence in chambers to Judge Eric Wintmore at Chichester Crown Court in November 1992. The man was fined £1,800 and avoided a custodial sentence. An inquiry into Mr Allinson's intervention found he had done nothing wrong.

Last night, Alan Michael, Labour's home affairs spokesman, said the incident was likely to result in fresh calls for tighter gun control. "I will be asking the Home Secretary to look into the matter. It seems extraordinary to me that, when one of the biggest problems facing us is the easy availability of illegal arms, a man like this can get a licence," he said.

Correspondence from Sussex police to Chichester Crown Court officials shows that when

Metropolitan Police officers raided the man's home in Worthing, West Sussex, they found 11 brand-named Greeners, Harrington, Remington, Stevens, Rae and Acciaio shotguns, two Crossman rifles, a Smith and Wesson rifle, a Ruger revolver, an unbranded revolver, two Colt pistols, a low-powered saloon pistol and five other pistols. In addition, the judge ordered the confiscation of 800 rounds of ammunition, several spare gun barrels and a .22

sound moderator, or silencer. There were also the 12 licensed shotguns. Court records, which were withdrawn because the informant is understood to have been put under police protection, show that at least one of the shotguns had been "shortened" - or sawn off - contrary to the Firearms Act.

Last night, Mike George, technical editor of *Sporting Gun* magazine, said: "Normally, holding a sawn-off shotgun is enough to get someone a cus-

tomodial sentence. And, if they have links with criminals, they aren't supposed to get a gun licence in the first place.

Sergeant Bill Ruddock of Sussex police confirmed that the man had been issued with a firearms certificate covering 12 shotguns. Despite one claim that the man had a conviction from the 1970s for possession of a firearm without a licence, Sgt Ruddock said the police national computer showed he had no criminal record before 1994.

MPs get all-clear on foreign paid trips

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

MPs are to be allowed to take paid trips abroad, financed by foreign governments or other organisations in spite of the attempts to tighten the rules on members' interests.

The members' interests committee is expected to give MPs the all-clear to take paid trips abroad in advice to MPs which it is issuing in the wake of the Nolan Committee's report on standards in public life.

There would have been a revolt among MPs, if the committee had barred them from taking such foreign trips.

The MPs will be advised that they can take part in debates on issues in the countries they visit, but they will be told not to initiate the debates. It will come as a relief to many MPs who take foreign trips as the guests of foreign countries, although many are sponsored by international corporations.

Some MPs have referred foreign paid trips to the Parliamentary Commissioner on members' interests, Sir Gordon Downey, for advice on the code of conduct to follow, if they agree to such trips.

The commissioner was appointed as part of the attempts to end the public disquiet about "sleaze" after allegations that some MPs accepted payments for tabling questions in the House of Commons.



Cut-price: Kit and the Widow, whose fee is reduced for *Salad Days*. Photograph: Rex

Stage is set for cheaper West End productions

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

The first play to be put on under a radical new agreement to cut the cost of West End stage productions - including actors' salaries and theatre rents - will open next month.

Salad Days is being staged at the Vaudeville Theatre, one of nine London theatres with less than 700 seats which have signed up to the scheme in a bid to compete with blockbuster musicals such as *Miss Saigon* and *Cats*.

The move is also aimed at encouraging "angels" - theatre investors - to put money into productions which until now have cost at least £200,000, and up to £2m or more at the top end.

The Small London Theatres Agreement, brainchild of the Society of London Theatres, cuts costs across the board. Actors who push up costs with salaries of £3,000 or more a week will have their earnings capped at £1,500 a week, with no share of box office royalties.

Equally, the theatres involved have pledged to halve the rents they charge to producers mounting shows in an attempt to create a replica of New York's off-Broadway in the West End.

The nine theatres involved are the Vaudeville, Ambassadors, Criterion, Duchess, Duke of York's, Fortune, Garrick, St Martin's and Whitehall. Ticket prices will be capped at £20, with standby tickets on offer at £12. Attempts will also be made to persuade ticket

agencies to cut the commission of up to £2.50 charged on ticket sales.

If everyone can agree to a cut of their slice of the cake, the idea is that a production has a better chance of getting on its feet and moving into profit, and that more productions are put on in the first place.

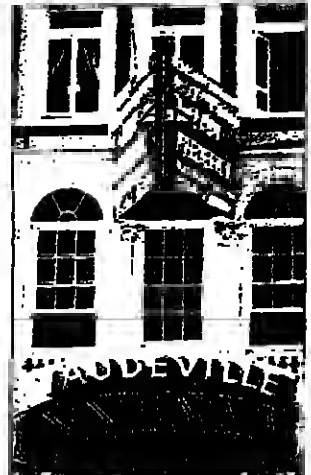
Edward Snape, the 30-year-old producer of *Salad Days*, said although the agreement was particularly aimed at helping stage new plays, in other ways the 1950s musical fitted the bill perfectly.

He has negotiated a royalty pool, which means that Ned Sherrin, the director, as well as the choreographer, designer and musical director, take a reduced share of the box office until the show moves into profit.

The owners of the Vaudeville's have agreed to accept half their usual rent and the lead actors, the musical duo Kit and the Widow, not to mention Mr Snape himself, are on reduced salaries. The show opens on 18 April.

Rupert Rhymes, chief executive of the Society of London Theatres, said the scheme would benefit young producers, who often find it difficult to raise the £200,000 needed to stage a new West End show.

"Everybody can cut back in order to make the project work, although it's still going to be the case that if a star wants something they're not going to be persuaded to take the minimum," he said.



The Vaudeville: One of nine theatres in scheme

"The idea of the agreement is to make London theatre more commercial, to encourage more theatre investors to come on board," Mr Snape said. "This means they have a better chance of making profit - at the moment I think it's one in eight for West End productions. Very often investors lose everything."

Rupert Rhymes, chief executive of the Society of London Theatres, said the scheme would benefit young producers, who often find it difficult to raise the £200,000 needed to stage a new West End show.

"Everybody can cut back in order to make the project work, although it's still going to be the case that if a star wants something they're not going to be persuaded to take the minimum," he said.

IN BRIEF

Children saved from petrol-bomb attack

Police were appealing for witnesses after a petrol bomb was thrown through the window of a flat in which two children slept on Saturday night.

The two children, six months and two years, were rescued by four babysitters, who put out the blaze at the flat in Penbil Wiltshire. All six were taken to hospital in Swindon for checks. A boy, 16, was arrested by police on suspicion of arson.

Tory agent defects

Home Office minister David Maclean has lost his agent. Geoffrey Trevelyan, Sir James Goldsmith's agent, has left the Tory agent's agency.

Threat to ships

Shipping safety is under threat from corrosion-causing bacteria. Tankers, tugs and ferries face contamination from micro-organisms which are increasing in numbers on board under-manned ships. Richard Stuart, an engineering surveyor with Lloyd's Register of Shipping, said:

School praised

Fettes College, the top public school in Edinburgh whose boys include Labour leader Tony Blair, has been given glowing reports by HM inspectors of Schools after its first inspection since 1981. Last year, 10 allegations of bullying and sexual assault at Fettes were denied by the school.

Lottery jackpot

Nine tickets shared Saturday's £7.9m National Lottery jackpot. The winning numbers were 3, 18, 5, 14, 43, 7; the bonus 28, 19.

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Illegal 'sport': Raids reveal 150-year-old ban ignored among close-knit communities

Secret network defies ban on cockfighting

WILL BENNETT

Every week in Britain and Ireland small groups of men, linked by a highly secretive network, gather to pit their fighting cocks in a battle to the death, sometimes waging thousands of pounds on the result. The "sport" was banned in this country in 1849 but a reminder of the network survives came last week when a court rejected the appeals of two men against prison sentences imposed for cockfighting offences. John Lee, 48, of Belvedere, Kent, is now serving three months and Mark Giles, 31, of Billingshurst, West Sussex, one month.

Together with 12 other men

'Normally, the loser would flee, but here there is no escape'

and a 16-year-old youth, they were caught when 40 police and officers from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals raided a cockfight in a caravan park at Belvedere last year. Those not jailed were fined up to £400, except for the youth who received a conditional discharge.

The case, only the fifth prosecution in the 147 years since cockfighting was made illegal, was a rare victory for the RSPCA. Another case is pending, resulting from a raid in the former mining community of Kelso, Co Durham.

Prosecutions are hard to bring because, unlike dogfighting which is the pastime of natural braggarts many of whom are known criminals, cockfighting takes place in Britain's most tightly knit communities. For some travelling families it

is a tradition going back generations, while more recently Asians have become involved.

Farmers and the few professional people who take part, believed to include doctors and lawyers, are also experts at concealing their activities. None of the usual sources such as underworld informers are any use, as it takes a long time to be accepted as part of the fraternity and many of the fights are held in remote rural areas.

The RSPCA is not revealing what led it to raid the fight in Belvedere. Chief Inspector Mike Butcher of its special operations unit, said: "Information came to our notice and we started a protracted inquiry. What happens is that every so often a piece of information comes in that makes the puzzle complete."

Of the 14 men convicted in the recent prosecution, 10 came from Kent, 2 from Sussex, 1 from Rotherham, South Yorkshire and 1 from Scunthorpe, Humbershire. Most were between 30 and 55 and were from traditional gypsy families. Cockfighting rings are also known to exist in the West Country, East Anglia and Hertfordshire.

Cocks fight both because of their strong territorial instinct and because handlers goad them before placing them in the pit. Normally the loser would flee but in the ring there is no escape and the victor, believing its rival is still a threat, kills it.

The birds — from traditional fighting breeds such as the old English game or newer imported Asian breeds such as the azil and the shama — either fight with their natural spurs sharpened or with three-inch metal spikes attached to their legs and the contests can last up to 20 minutes. It is an activity which even in the 19th century was regarded as barbarous, yet there are hundreds of people in Britain who still regard it as an enjoyable way to spend a day.



In the ring: Illegal since 1849, cockfights are still held every week. Photograph: Rex Features

Labour targets rapists in law and order plans

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

Rapists would be more likely to be convicted and sex offenders face tough new jail sentences under proposals published by Labour today.

The judiciary would also be given a new role in setting minimum jail terms for all offenders and the public would be given more information about how long criminals have to stay in prison. The package of measures, *Honesty, Consistency and Progression in Sentencing*, which was drawn up by Jack Straw, Labour's home affairs spokesman, will be discussed this week at the party's home affairs committee. It is expected to form a central plank in Labour's law-and-order election strategy.

The report deliberately clashes with the White Paper on sentencing from Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, which will be published on Thursday and proposes tough new measures against drug dealers and sex offenders.

Jack Straw said yesterday: "In the last 18 months we have often used the word crisis to de-

scribe the current state of the criminal justice system. It is not too strong a word.

"This paper outlines a series of proposals which could provide for greater consistency, progression and honesty in sentencing and offer more protection for the public against very serious offences."

Among his key proposals are measures against rapists and sex offenders. He suggests a new "renewable sentence", under which sex attackers, particularly repeat offenders, could stay in jail for ever.

Under the scheme, once an offender had completed the minimal jail term, the Parole Board would assess every two years whether they were safe to be released into the community. He or she would remain in jail until the board decided that they were reformed. While in prison they would be asked to undertake a treatment programme; failure to do so would count against them when their release date was considered.

Mr Straw also wants to increase convictions for rape. The proportion of people convicted once they are committed to court has fallen from 37 per cent

in 1980 to 9 per cent in 1994. He suggests that courts should ban questions about the victim's sexual history not relevant to the case. Second, cases in which men have been accused by several women of similar sex attacks will be heard at the same time, making conviction more likely.

On minimum sentences, Mr Straw proposes to allow the Court of Appeal, after consultation with various groups, to set guidelines for all main categories of offences. The court can already lay down judgments on sentences such as rape, incest and drug trafficking.

The new system contrasts sharply with the Government's proposals which have caused an outcry among the judiciary who believe they are having their powers of discretion removed.

The forthcoming White Paper proposes a three-year minimum sentence for persistent burglars, six years for drug-dealers on their second offence, and life for repeat rapists.

Other measures are to give courts more detailed information about previous convictions and to give judges and magistrates more feedback about the effects of their sentencing decisions.

Directors attack schools

Company directors have made a strong attack on "mistaken egalitarian policies" which they claim have lowered educational standards.

The Institute of Directors said decades of the policies had produced a generation of unemployable graduates and school leavers who could not read, write or cope with basic maths.

They were the result of the belief that it was unfair for the cleverest to succeed: of trendy teaching methods; and of exams

so easy that no one could fail.

In a report based on a survey of members, the institute condemned politicians of all parties for turning a "politically correct" blind eye while academic standards fell. It called for the clock to be turned back — to revive grammar schools, written exams, emphasis on the three-Rs and elite higher education — before Britain fell irreversibly behind its economic competitors.

The IoD's complaint drew a furious response from teachers' leaders. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers, attacked "hoardroom fat cats who have taken profits from the same tax cuts that have starved schools of money".

He said that the changes in courses which employers were now condemning — more practical skills and less formal academic education — were exactly what they had demanded 20 years ago.

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Peking's foe triumphs in Taiwan poll

TERESA POOLE
Taipei

China's leaders may be forced to reassess their strategy towards Taiwan following President Lee Teng-hui's sweeping victory in the island's first democratic presidential election. A key indication of whether tensions will ease could come over the next few weeks with a decision by Peking to halt its threatening military exercises.

Mr Lee, the candidate of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) party, won 54 per cent of the vote on Saturday, higher than predicted. Many analysts in Taipei believe China's belligerent tactics, aimed at reducing Mr Lee's vote, added as much as 10 per cent to his tally. The pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party's candidate, Dr Peng Ming-min, came second with 21 per cent.

Jean-Pierre Cabestan, director of the French Research Centre on Contemporary China, in Taipei, said: "Seventy-five per cent of people who voted refused not only reunification with China in the near future, but also refused to give in to China." Mr Lee has described reunification as an "ultimate goal", but not until the mainland becomes democratic. Ever since his trip to the United States last June, Peking has accused Mr Lee of secretly working for Taiwan's independence.

The most pro-reunification candidate in the election, Lin Yang-kang, won only 15 per cent. Voter turn-out was high at 76 per cent.

Mr Lee publicly set himself a target of winning more than 50 per cent, in order to strengthen his hand against Peking.

China's missile tests and military exercises in the seas near Taiwan not only helped Mr Lee win votes, but also prompted the United States to send two aircraft carriers into the region.



Warning signal: The US aircraft carrier *Nimitz* heading towards the South China Sea. The US has to decide this week whether it will enter the Taiwan Strait. Photograph: AFP

The confrontation focused world attention on Taiwan's emergence as a democratic state. Andrew Yang, secretary general of the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies in Taipei, said: "The [election] result has humiliated the Chinese government. The ball is in the Chinese court now."

The Chinese army, navy and aircraft exercises in the Taiwan Strait are due to finish today. Before the election, there were reports that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) planned further military drills. One test of whether there has been a reassessment of policy will be whether any new exercises are announced.

Peking's initial reaction to the election results was to claim that in spite of Mr Lee's landslide victory, China had "dealt a heavy blow to the Taiwan independence and separatist forces".

Only hours earlier, China had been accusing Mr Lee of pushing Taiwan into an "abyss of misery" with his pro-independence stance. By yesterday afternoon, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Shen Guofang, had told World Television News: "From our side we believe the door to negotiation is still open." But this, he warned, depended on Taiwan's authorities giving up "their pursuit of two Chinas".

In Taipei, Mr Lee yesterday ruled out compromise over seeking a greater international voice for Taiwan on the world stage, although the policy has enraged Peking.

Taiwan would continue "pursuing national dignity and firmly establishing our international place", he told a reception for overseas Taiwanese. However, the Prime Minister, Lien Chan, repeated recent comments that Taiwan was "interested in thinking seriously" about a peace agreement with the mainland.

Bolstered by his popular mandate, Mr Lee will press for a dialogue between Taipei and Peking to resume. Dr Cabestan said: "I think President Lee is

in a more comfortable position now. He may be tempted to take a few initiatives, to show his benevolence towards mainland China." Government officials point to possible concessions on air and postal links with the mainland, which Peking badly wants.

The Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, will have to decide how much room he has for manoeuvre. The failure of Peking's tactics has increased the pressure on Mr Jiang, whose leadership credentials for the post-Deng Xiaoping era are being tested by the Taiwan issue. A year ago, Mr Jiang took the initiative over Taiwan by announcing an "Eight-Point Plan"

for eventual reunification. The Chinese military, whose support would be crucial in a leadership battle, denounced the plan as too conciliatory. Mr Jiang swiftly changed tack. For the past 10 months, China's generals have driven a hardline strategy of military intimidation and threats to use force if Taiwan declares independence.

The question now is who controls Peking's Taiwan policy in the wake of the election. Mr Jiang has been silent recently, as the crisis unfolded. Yves Nallet, a Sinologist at China News Analysis, said: "Is President Jiang going to speak now, or not? If he speaks, it could prove that he is still in

charge of policy. If he does not speak, it means that probably there is a split, or the hardliners are in control."

The role of the US in the crisis will be crucial. Peking was surprised by the strength of the US reaction to China's sabre-rattling. This week, Washington will have to decide whether the US carrier, *Nimitz*, will pass through the Taiwan Strait, China's Prime Minister, Li Peng, last week warned a show of force in the Strait would make the situation "all the more complicated". The US has not said what route the *Nimitz* will take. Analysts fear an aggressive stance will play into the hands of Peking's hardliners.

Turkey offers olive branch to end Aegean clash with Greece

HUGH POPE
Istanbul

Turkey's new centre-right government yesterday offered a to make a fresh start in relations with Greece with talks on all aspects of the two rivals' disputes in the Aegean Sea.

With an eye on Greece's threat to veto European financial aid, the Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz, offered dialogue without preconditions.

"Turkey and Greece must overcome their hostility... this vicious circle must be broken," Mr Yilmaz said, in the Turkish capital, Ankara. "Our goal is to end all problems with Greece."

Turkey and Greece almost went to war in January over a pair of barren, rocky outcrops

in the Aegean Sea known as Kardak to the Turks and Imia to the Greeks. The American trouble-shooter Richard Holbrooke talked the two NATO allies into standing down, but warships from both countries still prowled the area.

Turkish-Greek distrust was highlighted last week when a dispute arose over who should feed the goats on the islets. The two sides reportedly agreed to take it in turns to ship in fodder.

"We can't take the issue of the Kardak rocks on their own. It's the result of many problems piled up over the years," Mr Yilmaz said.

Turks and Greeks have been uneasy and often warring neighbours for nearly a millennium. Points of friction include the

divided island of Cyprus, minorities in each other's countries and the relationship between the European Union and fast-developing Turkey.

As an EU member, Greece has been able to use its domestic concerns to block most of the European financial aid promised to Turkey since the military intervention of 1980-83.

Athens only allowed a customs union agreement with Turkey to go ahead on 1 January in return for a promise from Brussels to start accession talks with Cyprus.

The timing of Mr Yilmaz's comments was prompted by a Greek threat to veto promised aid worth £320m at a meeting of the Turkish-EU Association Council tomorrow.



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tim's families."
Touching all the usual bases
- a visit to the B-2 bomber fac-
tory to talk tough on defence,
the obligatory jaunt to the San
Diego border to harangue ille-
gal immigrants - Mr Dole made
Mr Clinton his chief opponent in
tomorrow's vote. He stead-

fastly ignored his theoretical ri-
val, Pat Buchanan. But if the
opening shots of the national
campaign are being fired in Cal-
ifornia, Mr Clinton's prospects
of re-election have seldom
looked so good.
Mr Dole has struggled to
make an impact in a state where
his grey personality seems out
of tune with West Coast culture.
California moved its primary
forward by two months to try to
give it a serious voice in pick-
ing the Republican candidate.
But Mr Dole on almost any
count already has enough dele-
gates to secure the nomination,
and seems certain yet again to

lobber Mr Buchanan, who,
unable to afford a plane, has pa-
raded noisily around California
in a bus. But his talk of a bat-
tle for the heart and soul of the
Republican Party is falling flat-
ter by the day, with polls giving
him less than 20 per cent.
A record low turn-out is ex-
pected. Even minor local races
have generated more excite-
ment than what one columnist
called the "yawning meaning-
lessness" of the primary cam-
paign. Tomorrow's ballot will
test how District Attorney Gil
Garceli, blamed for blunders
in the prosecution of OJ Simp-
son, fares against five chal-

lengers. There are the added
distractions of Proposition 197,
which would bring back cougar
hunting after two fatal attacks
on joggers. And the "terrible
200s", a series of propositions
to limit attorneys' fees in civil
lawsuits, have seen wealthy tri-
al lawyers fighting to hold on to
their livelihood.
For Mr Dole, California pre-
sents a quandary: it has 54 of
the electoral-college votes in No-
vember, and Mr Clinton would
almost certainly lose the White
House without it. President
George Bush is thought to have
made a fatal mistake when he
ignored the state in his re-elec-

tion effort in 1992. On the oth-
er hand, Mr Clinton has been
constantly solicitous about Cal-
ifornia's concerns, visiting the
state a record 23 times and sip-
ping Chardonnay with Barbra
Streisand and other members of
Hollywood's elite.
Mr Dole might be well ad-
vised to cede it to the Democ-
rats and concentrate his en-
ergies elsewhere. Immigration
is still a raw issue for Cal-
ifornians, who last year voted by
a solid majority for Proposition
187, a plan to bar schools and
public medicine to illegal im-
migrants. But Mr Clinton, with
much fanfare, has already dou-

bled the numbers of the Border
Patrol and stepped up immi-
gration controls at airports. Mr
Dole has flirted with the idea of
naming the state's Attorney-
General, Dan Lundgren, as his
vice-presidential nominee, but
even locally General Colin Pow-
ell is the only popular choice.
His attempt to stoke a stand
at San Quentin came on the day
that Republicans in the House
of Representatives reversed the
popular assault-weapons ban,
which was sponsored by the Cal-
ifornia Senator, Dianne Fein-
stein, partly in response to
massacres like the one at a
northern California elemen-

tary school in 1989. When Mr
Dole visited the California fac-
tory which produces the scan-
dalously expensive B-2 bomber,
he hinted he might double pro-
duction of what is regarded as
a Cold War white elephant.
"I understand the dangers of
an uncertain world," he said.
"Maybe President Clinton
doesn't." But California's re-
bounding economy, led by a hi-
tech and entertainment boom,
has begun to replace lost de-
fence jobs. No one on the pro-
duction line seemed to take the
promise of the Senate Majori-
ty Leader, the consummate
politician, very seriously.

Ghetto boy makes good for US blacks

LOCAL HEROES : 9

hington — If his life story
been submitted as a work
tion, it would have been re-
d as preposterous. After all,
k gang members in inner-
ghettos do not have road-
-manus experiences on
et corners that transform
lives. And just supposing
did, he would become a so-
worker, perhaps a church
ster. He certainly would not
r Congress, and turn into
of the most skillful and he-
-couraged figures in Capitol
- only to abandon that most
-ising career to take charge
he venerable but deeply



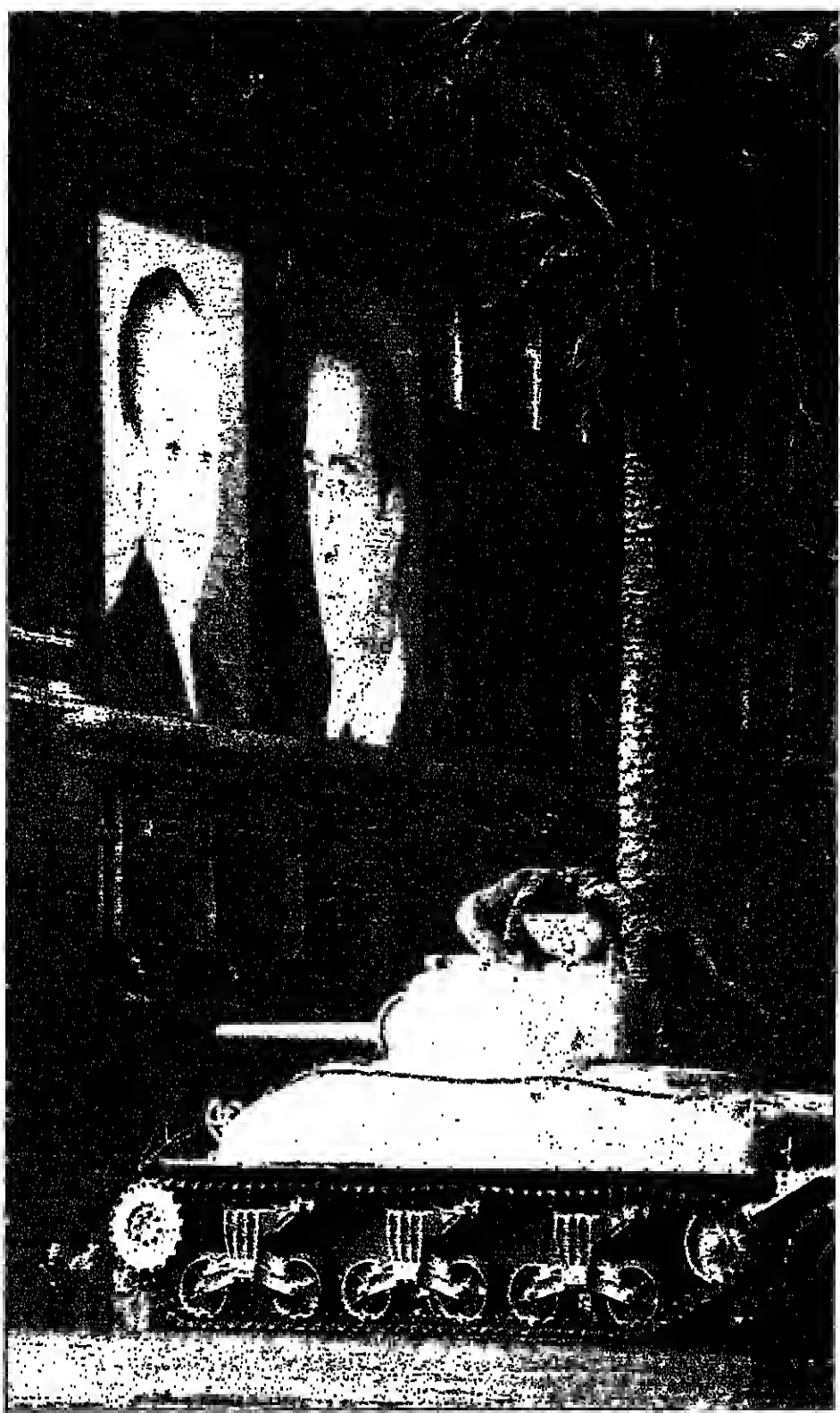
Jesse Jackson: Promises
ft, constructive change

bled dozen of America's civ-
-this groups.
ven in the land of make-
-eve, publishers would say,
sort of thing simply does not
pen. But in the case of
-isi Mfume, newly installed
-man of the National
-oalition for the Advance-
-it of Colored People, it has,
-rtzell Grey, who was horn
-ears ago and raised in Bal-
-ore, who hung out with
-et toughs and fathered five
-dren out of wedlock, really
-see the light one summer
- in 1972. Having realised
-folly of his ways, he went
-to school, got two degrees,
-red politics and was elect-

ed in 1986 to Congress, where
he became chairman of the
Black Caucus, and was seen by
many as a future Democratic
floor leader. Along the way, he
changed his name to Kweisi
Mfume, a Ghanaian term
meaning "Conquering Son of
Kings" - and found time to be
a proper father to his children.
This is epic stuff, and small
wonder that three weeks ago Mr
Mfume's first trip to Chicago
and the Midwest as head of the
NAACP, ostensibly to attend a
tribute of the National Rainbow
Coalition to its founder Jesse
Jackson, turned into a celebra-
tion of his own appointment.
"Go tell it on the mountain that
the NAACP is back," Mr
Mfume said. "We met the
enemy one day and it was us,
and in finding ourselves, we
found our future."

Not before time. Founded
after an Illinois race riot in 1909,
the NAACP is the oldest and
largest of America's main-
stream civil rights organisa-
tions. But in recent years it has
lost its way. At his swearing-in
ceremony last month which
President Bill Clinton attended,
Mr Mfume promised that
change at the NAACP would be
"swift, focused and construc-
tive". He has kept his word, in
a fashion which his admirers
perhaps did not expect - sack-
ing one-third of staff of the or-
ganisation's full-time staff after
a fortnight on the job. Having
defied logic in rescuing his own
life, his supporters say, surely he
can do the same with the
NAACP - and maybe with
black America as well.

Rupert Cornwell



Don't cry for her: A tank rumbling past portraits of Evita and Juan Peron in Budapest during filming of the controversial movie epic starring Madonna Photograph: AP

Evita has Hungary reliving 1956 revolt

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Budapest

Almost 40 years after Russian
tanks rolled through Budapest
to crush the 1956 uprising, the
Americans yesterday made a
belated response in kind.

As angry protesters gathered
on a square close to parliament,
two vintage US Sherman tanks
stormed in to disperse them.

But unlike the events of
October 1956, this was make-
-believe: the opening shots of what
is going to be more than a
month of filming for a contro-
versial production of *Evita*,
starring Madonna in the lead-
ing role.

The makers of the film, which
is based on the musical by An-
drew Lloyd Webber about the
life of Eva Peron, had gone to
great lengths to recreate the feel
of Buenos Aires in the 1950s.
Imitation palm trees, Argen-
tinean flags and large posters of
Eva and her husband, General
Juan Peron, adorned the square
where this weekend's crowd
scenes were filmed. The red star
on a monument commemorating
the city's liberation from the
Nazis by the Soviet army in 1945
had been discreetly concealed.

The filming of *Evita* began
earlier this year in Argentina but
was disrupted by protests over
the casting of Madonna in the
title role. Many Argentines still
revere Eva Peron, and felt the
pop star would debate her
memory. The Argentine Presi-
dent, Carlos Menem, declared
Madonna was unsuitable for the
role and described the musical
as "a libellous interpretation of
Evita's life".

Hungarians welcome the
filming as a source of extra
revenue and something that raises
the profile of their capital city.
But bemused onlookers hoping
to catch a glimpse of Madonna
were disappointed. She is not
due to arrive until tomorrow.

IN BRIEF

Kabul shelling kills 18

Kabul — Rebels shelled the Afghan capital yesterday, killing 18
civilians and wounding 14 in a busy shopping street, witnesses
said. One shell crashed into the Shahr-i-Nau district in central
Kabul, killing six shoppers instantly. Twelve others died in hos-
pital. It was part of a salvo that hit the city as frontline fighting
between forces loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani and the
Taliban Islamic militia intensified. Reuter

A facelift for the greenback

Washington — The new American \$100 note, given a facelift to
make counterfeiting harder, will enter circulation this week. The
US Federal Reserve will today start shipping to banks the new
notes, which will still carry the face of Benjamin Franklin but with
a larger portrait shifted off centre. By today, 850 million new \$100
notes will have been printed. Reuter

Hillary and Chelsea start European tour

Ramstein — The US first lady, Hillary
Rodham Clinton (right) arrived yester-
day in Germany on a 10-day trip to
Europe. Her visit, a mix of politics and
tourism, also includes stops in Italy,
Turkey and Greece. Mrs Clinton is due
to fly today to Tuzla, where US troops
in Bosnia are based. Mrs Clinton was
joined by her daughter Chelsea, 16, who
is on spring break. AP



Iraqi voters face limited choice

Baghdad — Iraq yesterday held its first parliamentary elections
since 1989. All 689 candidates were approved by the government.
Officials estimated that 90 per cent of Iraq's 8 million registered
voters would vote. AP

Kashmir avalanche leaves 36 dead

Muzaffarabad — An avalanche has killed 36 people and injured
27 in a remote village in the Pakistan-ruled part of the disputed
Kashmir region. The avalanche, the second in nine days, swept
away 27 houses and a mosque before dawn on Saturday. Helicop-
ters were sent to the area yesterday with relief supplies. AP

Benin's former ruler makes a comeback

Cotonou — Benin's constitutional court yesterday named ex-dic-
tator Mathieu Kerekou the winner of last week's presidential elec-
tion. It said he won 52.49 per cent of the votes, while the incumbent
President Nicéphore Soglo received 47.51 per cent. Kerekou came
to power in a 1972 coup, and declared the country a Marxist-Lenin-
ist state. He was forced to relinquish power in 1990
after a popular revolt. AP

Britain joins South China Sea exercises

Singapore — Aircraft and warships staged exercises off Malaysia
and Singapore yesterday as part of the Five Power Defense
Arrangement, which links Britain, Australia, New Zealand,
Malaysia and Singapore. The 1971 pact came about after Britain
withdrew its forces from Singapore and Malaysia. The units
taking part include a Royal Navy destroyer. AP

Finns behaving badly

Aboard the Silja Scandinavia — Drinkers on this Baltic ferry
claimed two new records in their second Finnish beer-drinking
championships. An engineer, Matti Pustinen, 21, downed eight
bottles of beer in 1 min 10.36 seconds and a student, Risto Saikkonen,
34, took the title in the Small Tankard event with a new record
of 1.61 seconds. Reuter

This week in THE INDEPENDENT

From today,
Section Two has a
completely new look,
with more pages,
new features, a daily
radio column and an
expanded listings
section providing
Britain's most
comprehensive daily
guide to going out.

on Monday

A new section focusing on Family Life, beginning with
an investigation into how children's television is
threatening the family unit. In the centre pages, each
week we challenge the personalities and institutions
that have become icons of Nineties life. On Monday,
we ask: Do we need Start the Week? Plus: In the
second part of our series on the making of the modern
girl, we examine teenage attitudes to sex,

relationships and marriage.

and in Sport

A 24-page section with all the action from a big
weekend of sport. Plus: Part one of a major
investigation into the crisis afflicting English cricket.
Where does our summer game go from here? And the
Monday interview with Alan Shearer, the striker who
doesn't mind not scoring goals for England.

on Tuesday

Part three of the making of the modern girl: how the
Nineties generation gets what it wants.
Plus: Health - a new treatment for chronic fatigue.

Also on Tuesday, fashion, architecture, visual arts and
media. Our new back pages section introduces a
weekly feature on the history of popular culture.

on

Theatre, midweek travel section, your money, finance
and law. Plus - Final part of the making of the modern
girl: what the future holds for the teenager of the
Nineties

In our back pages, Martin Newell, Britain's leading
rock poet, and Neil Kerber, one of the country's
funniest cartoonists, present their views of the modern
world.

on Thursday

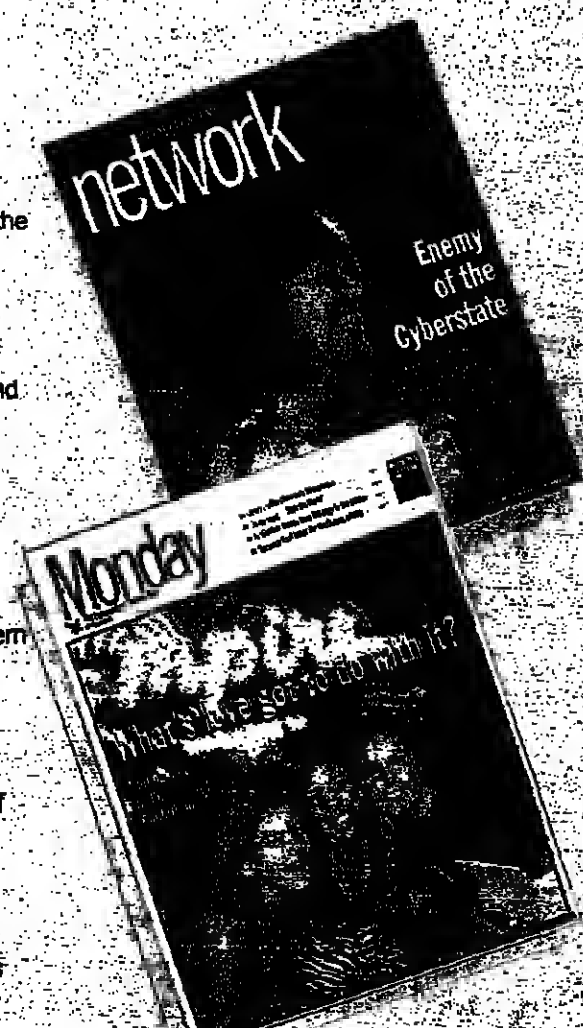
All our regular features, including Dilemmas, John
Walsh's column, plus film, education and graduate

plus. In the back pages, William Hartston's history of
the world in 10 1/2 inches

on

24Seven - a brand new 20-page pull-out-and-keep
entertainment and listings section. Including a
complete day-by-day planner for the week ahead, plus

seven-day TV, radio and satellite listings, ticket offers
and informed comment on the week's highlights



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The parties' public debates on the EU have only exposed bitter divisions, writes **Mary Dejevsky**

The Socialists parted happily, content to have got all the left around one table, but without the barest outline of a political



He said Mr Juppé had given him an undertaking that there would be no action by the police against the group after the eviction from St Ambroise.

After yesterday's police operation against the gymnasium, the cleric said that either Mr Juppé had not kept his word, or that he did not know what the ministers were doing, "in which case he lacks authority and should go".



Lukashenko has ceased being a president. He is now outside the law and the constitution," Zenon Poznyak, leader of the Belarussian Popular Front, told the crowd on the streets of Minsk.

According to early projections, the FDP got into all three state assemblies, winning 7.6 per cent in Baden-Württemberg, 6.5 per cent in Schleswig-Holstein, and 9 per cent in Rheinland Palatinate.



LEGOLAND
LAND OF DISCOVERY

LEGOLAND.
WORLD

**Private
Queen**

215 Patch?

[Illegible text]



100

The cross-border Irish band The Wild Spirits wrote to Dr Paisley ask-

Eagle Eye

*A small charge is made for the "Shopping Gallery" in frontland and parking for Gold 12-11 year olds inclusive

THE INDEPENDENT
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Testing time for privatisation

The regulators who oversee the privatised monopolies that supply electricity, gas, water and phone services, face a time of trial. During the next few weeks, the public pronouncements of the Office of Telecommunications chief Don Cruickshank and the Director General of the Office of Water Services, Ian Byatt, will merit the closest attention. They will be making critical decisions. On their performance rests not just how much consumers will be paying for water and phone use at the century's turn, but the fate of the privatisation programme itself.

The way water is regulated will be shown up as Yorkshire Water answers charges of incompetence in its investment planning for pipes and its handling of last summer's drought. Next month in the West Country, a fascinating experiment - masterminded by the Office of Gas Supply - starts transforming British Gas into a "common carrier" for competing gas suppliers, which if successful could mean there is less need for regulation at all.

Privatisation does indeed rank as one of the great achievements of the period of Conservative rule that began in 1979. But the book is not yet closed, and the way the regulators treat the market movements that are leading to growing concentration in supply will be a significant episode in privatisation history.

The quality of water management is variable, to say the least, and one way to force bad managers out is by hostile takeover. The management of the utility providing water and sewerage in Devon and Cornwall has a mixed track record which includes (accidentally) poisoning locals and releasing thousands of gallons of their drinking water into the English Channel. Last week Severn Trent Water announced a bid for South West Water, which is already "in play" after an earlier bid by Wessex. This will be presented as a way of substituting a more effective management team. But who is to judge? These are, in their regions, nearly pure monopolies: the water pits cannot fail; the only regular and effective stimulus to efficiency and effectiveness is the regulator. No amount of rhetoric about market forces can relieve the government's regu-

lators from the need to protect consumers against price abuse. When Northumbria Water was taken over by the French Compagnie Lyonnaise des Eaux it insisted on a consumer bonus in the form of domestic water charge reductions. That surely is going to be a minimum precondition if South West Water is merged. But that is not the only consideration. Will investment plans - Devon and Cornwall need more water storage - expand? What if Wessex or Severn Trent, bidding competitively, end up paying the odds for South West? Where is the consumer interest in that? These are hard questions, but is Ofwat capable of answering them? The nagging doubt must be whether its small Birmingham office is competent to deal with industrial wide boys and City slickers.

Meanwhile, British Telecommunications plc and Cable and Wireless are out a-courting. Will they, won't they? Their marriage would dramatically change the basis on which the Office of Telecommunications has operated since the early 1980s. Till now OfTel's line has been to maximise competition. Logic dictates it should resist further concentration in the domestic telecoms market. But BT has, over the years, made a robust case for size, especially in global markets. Is OfTel the competent judge? It is not enough to say these conflicts of interest will be resolved if, as is likely, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission steps in as the superior judge. BT's fate is, whether the government likes the phrase or not, a question of industrial policy, which ministers - who only the other week set up a new Cabinet committee on the future shape of computers and telecoms - cannot duck.

Water and telecoms are not the only arenas in which the state's capacity to keep abreast of market movements has been called into question. But these markets are special; they have been created by the government. The public needs to be assured that its interests are being competently and consistently considered. Till now these watchdogs have basked in public approval. They claim to be independent. But they also need to be sharp, forward-looking, savvy and courageous enough to say no, whichever way share prices move.

A BBC blasphemy

For many years it has not been very clear exactly what the board of governors of the BBC is for. Except in times of institutional crisis (such as the late Eighties, when they fired the hapless Alasdair Milne as the Corporation's Director-General) the governors have not been regarded as significant players.

That is partly because they appear to have been chosen exclusively from a narrow section of the establishment: a headmistress of a girls' public school (never a state one), someone who was once in a Labour government, a senior clergyman from one of the Scottish churches, a former permanent secretary and - to complete a bodful for the Proms or Goodwood - a pukka big businessman and a right-wing trade unionist. All humanity is most certainly not there. Even television producers and channel controllers can claim greater familiarity with life as it is lived.

Alas, the BBC's new charter defines a statutory role for the governors, part of which is in supervising the taste and decency of the Corporation's output. Or rather, in limiting bad taste and indecency. This week the outgoing chairman of the board of governors, Marmaduke Hussey, outlined new guidelines to add to the several thousand already available to BBC personnel. Among other things, greater

care is apparently to be taken in the use of bad language and "especially, religious language" before the 9pm watershed.

Taste and decency are real concerns, to which BBC editors must be alert. But they have a problem: whose taste and whose decency? If listeners do not accept, say, Chris Evans' language, they presumably would not listen to him: the problem is that people do want to listen to Chris Evans, partly because of his irreverent language. And why should we regard irreverent language, or even some common swear words, as being worse than the corruption of our language by cliché? Some find the use of clichés in news bulletins ("bears all the hallmarks", for instance) more offensive.

As far as sex and nudity are concerned, how much of that is worse than the competition going on between the *Casualty* and *Silent Witness* make-up teams to produce the most disgusting corpse of the week?

The commercial pressures on the BBC to keep audiences against ever more fierce competition, as well as the changing expectations of the listening population, inevitably exert a greater force on programme makers and editors than Marmaduke Hussey: their response to him, in practice, is likely to be printable only as a row of asterisks.

Guidelines on mad government disease

At the Government's request, scientists have been meeting over the weekend to work out beef guidelines. We have obtained a transcript of part of the proceedings and here it is...

Chairman: Well, better get things going, I suppose. As you know, we are all here to get the Government out of a hole. Any thoughts on how we can do this? Jim?

Jim: I'd like to ask WHY we should help the Government out of a hole. I don't see why we should rally round to get a government that has been so anti-science and anti-science education.

Chairman: Nor do I, but this isn't really a good time to make this point. If we help them now, they are more likely to help us in the future. And all we've been asked to do this weekend is decide what guidelines should be issued on the place of British beef in children's menus. Yes, Sidney?

Sidney: I think the word "menu" is misguided when it comes to children. "Menu" suggests exercising choice, taste, discretion. Children do none of these things. When they go into a place like a McDonald's restaurant they know exactly what they want already. Menu doesn't come into it. The word is wrong.

Jim: I think the word "restaurant" is wrong for McDonald's as well. A

restaurant conjures up certain images of ambience, of comfort, of tradition... **Chairman:** Look! PLEASE! Can we... Yes, Margaret?

Margaret: I think it's quite monstrous in the first place that the Government should expect scientists to come up with guidelines over a weekend. Science doesn't work like that.

Chairman: Yes, but we're not here to act as scientists. We're here to save the Government's bacon.

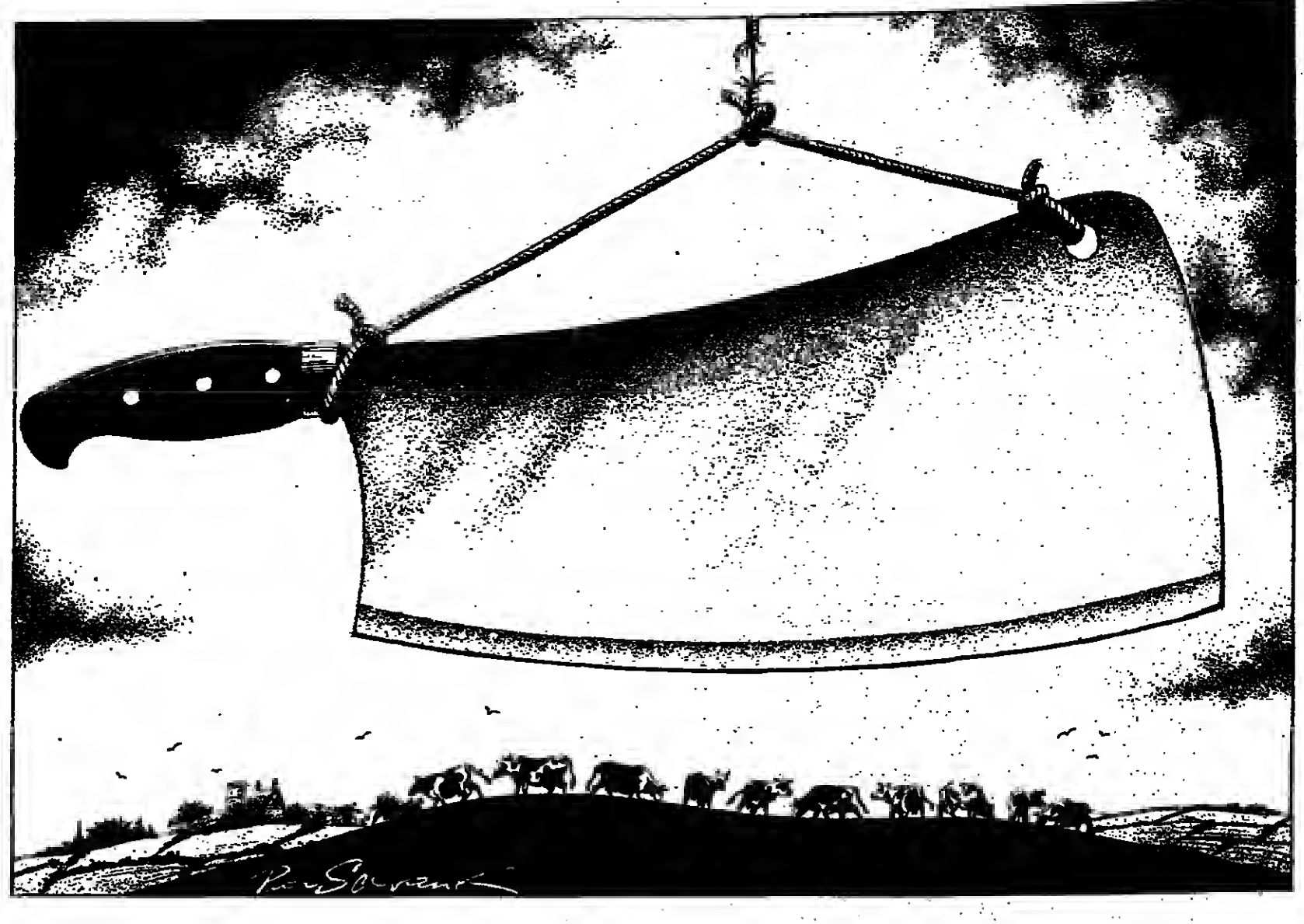
Donald: Bacon? What bacon? I thought it was beef we had to do.

Chairman: Never mind, Sir Donald. You go back to sleep while we...

Jim: Nor can I see what good these guidelines are going to do. Nobody obeys guidelines. There are guidelines to stop cows with BSE getting into the food chain, but we all know that they are getting in, because farmers know ways round it. There are guidelines to stop people smok-



MILES KINGSTON



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BSE is rife in dairy herds so why don't we worry about milk?

Sir: Virtually all BSE cases have occurred in dairy herds. Dairy herds are not slaughtered for beef. This means that what we eat as beef is not affected by the disease.

On the other hand, what the Government have not addressed is the problem with milk and cheese and other associated dairy products. If dairy herds are seriously affected by BSE, what we should really be concerned about is milk and cheese derived from dairy cows.

JAMES HALE
London SE15

Of anyone having had a "clean animal" go down with BSE. The vast majority of these animals would be slaughtered under two and a half years of age.

It seems rather harsh to throw these cattle into the barrel with old dairy cows and say "there is an unquantifiable risk in eating beef" because the Government or scientists cannot give a zero risk statement on the safety of beef.

When I inspected my cattle this evening they, as always, looked a picture of healthy thriving animals and I cannot help but wonder what "bunging" has gone on by scientists, government, media, whoever?

If the disease comes from feeding meat and bone meal to the cattle and meat and bone meal have been banned for seven years, how can "clean" cattle, slaughtered when they are two and a half years old, (born four and a half years after the ban) be infected with BSE?

JOHN SMITH
Hereford

Sir: The last Labour government had prepared regulations to control the production of ruminant derived protein, in particular for use in animal feed. The "market mad" Conservative Party, on entering government, rejected the regulatory route and left the industry to draw up its own guidelines.

Deregulation meant less stringent procedures, causing animal feed not to be heated to appropriate temperatures, which allowed the scrapie contagion from sheep's brains to survive the rendering process and cause the BSE outbreak. This is one area of policy in which the Labour Party has been proven continuously entirely correct.

JOSEPH HUGHES
Socialist & Environment & Resources Association
London N4

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JOSEPH HUGHES
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Sir: Now that European countries have banned the export of British beef as there is an "extremely small" risk of it causing CJD, will they also ban the export of British cigarettes which have an extremely high risk of causing lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, bladder cancer, stomach ulcers...

DR MICHAEL INGRAM
Radlett, Hertfordshire

The price of fishing in The Gambia

Sir: Your leading article (19 March) "Tightening the net" had a sadly eurocentric ring to it.

On a recent visit to our link community of Gunjur, the principal fishing village in The Gambia, the impact of EU fishing agreements with The Gambia and other West African countries is there to be seen on the beach. The price that women are having to pay for a bowl of fish from the local canoes has risen from 5 to 20 dalasis in the past five years. Fishermen are having to spend 12 hours at sea rather than six to fill their boats.

They are regularly confronted by European trawlers which dam-

Silent reaction to poverty

Sir: The UK Coalition for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty welcomes the recognition you give to the initiative to help people experience poverty ("Hume praises the courage of Britain's poor", 20 March).

The anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development has come and gone, a summit at which the UK government signed up to producing national poverty eradication plans by the end of this year. Where are these plans in this the UN's Year for the Eradication of Poverty? The British government has been silent.

We have written to Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, about this and he has replied by saying, "It is our view that the recommendations in the Programme of Action on the desirability of producing national poverty eradication plans principally relate to the needs of underdeveloped countries"; he then goes on to say that the UK already has "the infrastructure and social protection systems to prevent poverty and maintain living standards".

What hope is there for people experiencing poverty if this is the attitude of the Government?

MONA PATEL
Co-ordinator
UK Coalition for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty
London SE5

Growing attraction of the church

Sir: The trouble with bald statistics is that they produce bald pictures. To suggest, as your leader does (22 March) that "Christian worship and church membership are old people's activities" is not merely simplification in the extreme, but also insulting to both old and young, and just plain wrong.

As your leader points out, Anglican attendance in England is now "broadly stable". We cannot prevent people dying, so logic demands that the Church must be attracting new worshippers to replace them, even to stand still. In the Diocese of Oxford, our average Sunday attendance has grown steadily for the past five years. And your suggestion that teenagers do not come back in later years is simply not borne out by the figures. Out of 48,000 people confirmed in the Church of England in 1994 (the latest figures available) 40 per cent, or more than 19,000, were aged 20 years or over.

The Church of England, which is also planting more congregations every fortnight, hardly sounds like a church coming to the end. Growth in numbers and growth in congregations are just two signs of vitality.

Add to this the considerable growth in financial contributions by individual church members, impossible to estimate entirely of pensioners, and the picture is completely different to the one painted by your leader.

More people attend Church of England services on a Sunday than league football matches over the whole weekend. How many other organisations can command a membership of 1.5m in England today? Come to that, what activity can draw in more than 6m members as the churches do throughout the UK?

RICHARD ONON
(The Rt Rev Richard Onon, Bishop of Oxford)

Jacob's ladder

Sir: I was pleased to see Betty Swanwick's album cover for *Selling England By The Pound* chosen in the "Great Covers" series by Robert Webb (22 March).

Mr Webb says he can't see the biblical significance of the image. I had the pleasure of being Ms Swanwick's tenant shortly after this cover was produced and she explained to me that the picture was in fact "Jacob's ladder". While Jacob sleeps and dreams, figures ascend and descend the ladder suggested behind him. The lawn mower was apparently added to the picture on request by Genesis who had, Ms Swanwick told me, "got a new instrument that sounds like a lawn mower" and wanted it included.

MARK BUNYAN
e-mail: bunycrai@atlas.co.uk

Land-mine ban

Sir: There has been for some time a campaign to encourage the British government to join the majority of western countries in a total ban on the manufacture of anti-personnel mines, commonly known as land-mines.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the US, General John Shalikashvili, seems to have changed his mind in favour of a total ban in the US, leaving our government isolated in the international community.

Land-mines kill and maim indiscriminately. Survivors usually lose at least one limb, and the subsequent care needed and human productivity lost is unimaginable.

I would very much welcome an announcement by the British government that it, too, finds the production of these abhorrent weapons unsupportable, and will order a ban on manufacture. Britain has, of course, not exported land-mines for over a decade.

MATTHIAS VON BOEVERTER
Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire

Marriage and mathematics

Sir: If they are going to teach marriage in schools (Letters, 23 March) I hope that they will teach it better than they teach mathematics.

DR C R LEEDHAM-GREEN
School of Mathematical Sciences
Queen Mary and Westfield College
University of London

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Sinn Fein: united but split

Martin McGuinness may talk of 25 more years of violence, but most Republicans see peace talks as the only way forward

Martin McGuinness, in one of the first speeches at the weekend Sinn Féin Ard-Fheis (Annual Conference), conveyed to delegates the important message that there is no split in the Republican movement. "We are as together as we have been for 25 years. We are united. We will remain united," he declared.

McGuinness, as a man with the reputation for both militarism and an interest in political activity, has, in effect, often functioned as a liaison between the military and political elements of the Republican movement. As such, delegates were keenly interested to hear his message.

He was correct in signalling that there is no split: you can always tell when there is a split, because when there is one they start shooting each other. The rule of thumb is that if there are no bodies at the roadside, there is no split.

What there is, however, is a chasm within the movement, a yawning gap between the IRA leader - who the other day threatened, "If that's what the British want, we will give them another 25 years of war" - and the bulk of the Republican community, who want no such thing.

That community, the 80,000 or so who in Northern Ireland regularly vote for Sinn Féin, supported, or at least tolerated, violence for a quarter of a century. Most of them thought in military terms and for most of the troubles regarded the IRA, not Sinn Féin, as their curing edge which forced the world to pay attention to them.

The IRA ceasefire of August 1994 was, in Republican terms, an initiative of breathtaking scope, a unilateral move away from all that, a move towards a whole new mindset. They could have fought on, but the sense of relief that coursed through the Republican community showed widespread approval for the cessation. Most in that community were clearly ready to bid farewell to the use of arms.

The mood of the previous Ard-Fheis, which was held in the wake of the ceasefire, was recalled at the weekend by Jim Gibney, one of Sinn Féin's more reflective leaders. He said: "Last year there was a great sense of expectation, of optimism, of movement. I felt we had crossed the Rubicon of armed conflict. It seemed to me that, at last, dialogue as the instrument of

political change, was anchored centre-stage."

At the weekend, there was precious little buoyancy and optimism to be seen in a movement faced only with hard choices. Before the Docklands bomb, Gibney and other Sinn Féin leaders, were proud of the new contacts and relationships they developed during the 17 months of cessation. They felt that Sinn Féin was, however slowly, getting somewhere.

The bomb propelled the movement in the opposite direction, reasserting its capacity for brute force but undermining its political gains. It damaged Adams and the Sinn Féin leadership and demonstrated to the world that the movement encompasses two starkly conflicting viewpoints. There may be unity on the point that they should not split, but there isn't any on what to do next, and the Republicans have little time to resolve their differences by leisurely debate. The peace process is now moving along on a tight schedule, with an election to be held on 30 May and talks to start on 10 June.

Sinn Féin now has a series of tactical decisions to make. It is unlikely

DAVID MCKITTRICK

There was precious little buoyancy in a movement faced only with hard choices

to boycott the election itself, unless John Hume's SDLP decides to do so. But both Sinn Féin and the SDLP are unlikely to take part in the new forum, which will inevitably have a Unionist majority. In the meantime, as David Trimble's hard-line weekend speech showed, all parties are moving into election mode with the familiar hardening of positions and consequent rise in politi-

cal and other tensions. The IRA, to judge from its violence and a series of belligerent statements, is in no mood to declare another ceasefire. This means that unless the unexpected happens, Sinn Féin looks like fighting the election while no IRA ceasefire is in effect.

One of David Trimble's original arguments for wanting an election was that it would provide everyone with a new mandate. But even if no IRA bombs go off during the election campaign, the fact that no IRA ceasefire exists means that Sinn Féin's mandate would be a highly ambiguous one which would do little to convince those suspicious of the party and its democratic credentials.

The Ard-Fheis heard no open criticism of the IRA, but judging from what Republicans say in private, many in Sinn Féin wish the Docklands bomb had never happened and regard it as a serious setback. Republicans blame John Major and John Bruton rather than the IRA Army Council for the collapse of the cessation, but there is much uncertainty about the IRA's next move. At the moment, after four bombing incidents in London,

it has pushed the pause button and there have been no attacks in Northern Ireland.

This could mean an internal IRA debate is underway; it could be a sign that the terrorists wanted to deliver a short, sharp, violent shock; it could be a recognition that the bombs have not been popular with the wider Republican community. But there could be more attacks at any moment, while there could also be violence from the Irish National Liberation Army or from the Loyalists, who also represent potential threats to peace.

At this point, the way ahead is surrounded by thorny thickets of questions of mistrust, de-commissioning of weapons, what should be first on the agenda for talks and so on. Unionists want cast-iron guarantees on de-commissioning; the IRA has said there won't be any this side of a negotiated settlement.

If the IRA is not intent on a return to war, then what it wants is talks with as few preconditions as possible. They do not want Sinn Féin to arrive at the conference table trussed up like a turkey, with major decisions having gone against them even before negotiations begin.

There will thus be no new IRA ceasefire unless the IRA is convinced that the negotiations will be for real. But the fact that there is no ceasefire means the peace process has become not so much an uphill path as a minefield.

This Ard-Fheis is by no means a re-dedication to another 25 years of violence. There were no ringing endorsements of armed struggle, and the prevailing opinion seemed to be that there was little alternative but to attempt to revive the peace process. That in itself is of critical importance. The Army Council may turn out to be intent on more war, or a combination of events may trigger off a new spiral of violence. There are many dangers around, but alongside them is a source of hope that large numbers of Republicans would regard a reversion to full-scale violence as futile and ultimately doomed.

'The Nervous Peace', the third collection of David McKittrick's journalism from the 'Independent', covering the period from the August 1994 IRA cessation to its breakdown in February of this year, was published last week by Blackstaff Press.

Why cartoon Britain keeps on winning

You won't see two of Britain's most popular stars among the glittering throng of Hollywood contenders at the Oscars ceremony tonight, but Wallace and Gromit will be represented by Nick Park, the animator who created these much-loved Plasticine characters. Winning the category of Best Animated Short with *A Close Shave*, would be a hat-trick for Park, as he already has two of those golden statuettes - but at least he won't be competing against himself, as he did in 1992 when his film school graduation piece, *A Grand Day Out*, tied with his first Channel-4 financed short, *Creature Comforts*, for the award. Two years later, another outing for that man and his dog, *The Wrong Trousers*, won again.

The appeal of Wallace and Gromit is undoubtedly linked to the cosy, nostalgic "forever England" atmosphere they evoke, and the ingenious mechanical solutions provided by eccentric inventor Wallace's long-suffering canine sidekick Gromit. Strong storylines and characters, along with technical virtuosity, have made these films popular with audiences here and abroad, perhaps for the novelty of seeing them in animated form.

But the success of British animation isn't confined to Nick Park alone. Over the past decade British animation has won the lion's share of all prizes at every major festival for animated film the world over. The prestigious Cartoon d'Or, a prize for Best European Animated Film, has gone to British films almost every year since it began in 1990: the one exception was a film made in France (by a British animator).

British animated short films have won such a strong international reputation because of their astonishing range and diversity, both in technique and subject matter. They have long

Animators are the success story of British film. But we risk losing them to Hollywood, warns Jayne Pilling

gone beyond the old distinction between "cartoons for kiddies" and "animation as art" - the latter an allegorical fable, usually concerned with man's inhumanity to man. Instead, British animation has pioneered the concept of animation for adult audiences, which has become a crucial part of its appeal - and its impact.

Drawing from the experimental approach of art-college education, young animators have been making films on hitherto unlikely subjects - including incestuous abuse, autism, sexual relationships and UFO experiences - while the expressive potential of animation has led them to new techniques and materials.

Channel 4 was the catalyst for the animation explosion. Jeremy Isaacs, the channel's first chief executive, seeing that a remit to encourage minority viewing could extend beyond shocking soaps, hobby programming and hitherto unknown forms of sport, established the first commissioning editor for animation, to finance short, personal films. The striking number of award-winning films that emerged via Channel 4 created a critical mass of exciting work that has attracted many aspiring animators.

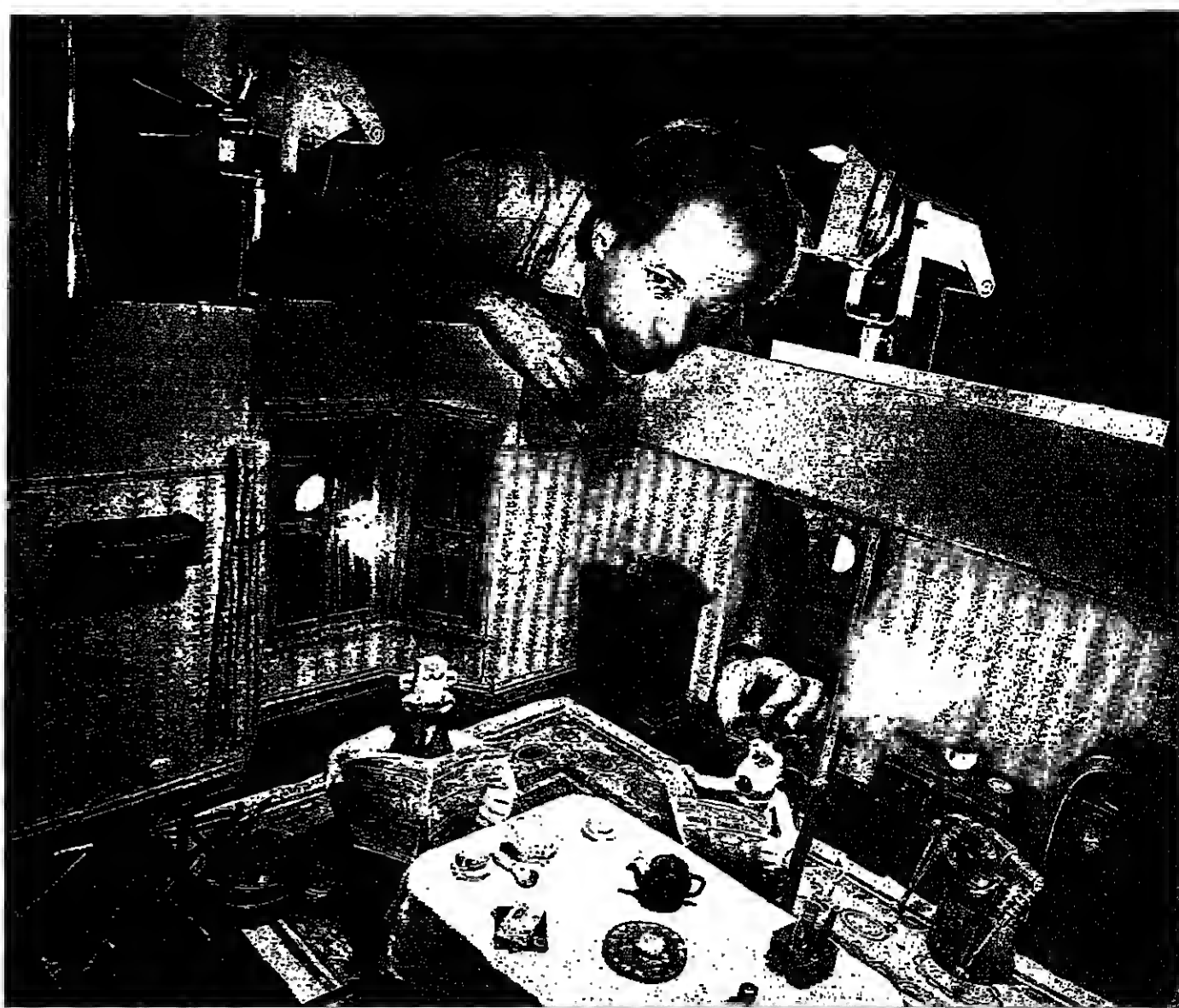
Many animators mix their own short film-making with more lucrative work on commercials. High-budget

TV ads can also provide subsidised R&D: new techniques, expensive computer facilities can be tried out, and the experience fed back into more personal work. And sometimes it works in reverse: *Creature Comforts* led to a popular TV ad campaign (those cute zoo animals talking about electricity), and is just one of many short films that have inspired commercials. Animators in Britain also have opportunities to work on title sequences, rock videos, computer games, and now multi-media computer technologies (such as those in *Jurassic Park*) which blur the lines between what is "real" filmmaking and what is animation.

Channel 4 continues to pioneer. The cult animated sitcom *Crayon Vixen*, shocked many with its ribald dissection of bed-sit life and it will shortly be followed by an animated soap opera. Yet this success is vulnerable, for Channel 4 and the other broadcasters do not seem to be able to come up with scheduling strategies to maximise the adult audience that exists for animation. Also, the BBC needs to invest in new talent, and recognise the importance of the short form to the development of that talent, not just rely on a Nick Park franchise. And the Government must protect the art school budgets where cuts threaten to stop the flow of young innovators.

In the wake of Disney's resurgence, and the realisation that adults will pay to see animated features, all the major Hollywood studios are desperately bidding against each other for scarce talent - and recruiting heavily in the UK. It would be a shame if British animation skills became simply part of the special-effects sector that has long serviced the Hollywood film industry.

Media coverage has largely ignored animation, the one consistent success story of the British film industry, and



English heroes: Wallace and Gromit relax at home with their creator Nick Park

Photograph: Mark Harrison/Radio Times

instead has focused on the hand-wringing and dire threats of doom and destruction that come from the lobby for feature films. It might be best to play to our strengths. Perhaps the recent parliamentary motion calling for recognition of animation, in all its

aspects, as a popular art-form will prompt the Lottery to fund the development of animation as part of our unique national heritage.

The writer is the organiser of the British Animation Awards.

The NHS's great kidney failure

Britain has dialysis facilities among the worst in Europe but a legal reform could save many lives

"Thousand Dead In Medical Disaster!" That would be quite a headline. Who? Where? When? Luckily for the Government no one knows who they are, although the Department of Health is sitting on a report that shows at least a thousand people a year die of kidney failure because of the lack of kidney dialysis facilities.

Unfortunately I cannot begin this column with a telling, indignant quote from a grieving next-of-kin because relatives of the dead patients rarely discover that their loved one had renal failure or that their lives could have been saved. People are so trusting when a doctor says solemnly, "Sorry, there's nothing more I can do." The death certificate will almost certainly give heart failure or pneumonia as the immediate cause and not the kidney failure that precipitated it. But if we had a thousand names and faces, a roll-call of the annual dead, then public indignation would soon put a stop to it.

How do we know so many die? Because the Department of Health commissioned a report, the Renal Service Review, exploring the erratic provision of kidney treatments. The report was delivered back in the autumn of 1994. The department promised to publish it, but has prevaricated.

This is what it says: all suitable patients up to the age of 80 should get life-saving renal dialysis, but many never get the chance. On average, 80 new patients in every million of the population will need treatment for kidney failure each year, but in Britain only 65 people per million get it. Among European countries, only

Bulgaria dialyses fewer people per head of population.

Regional variations verge on the grotesque. While there should be some differences, partly due to Asians and Afro-Caribbeans' greater vulnerability to kidney failure, there is no excuse for the great chasm in provision between regions: in Wales 108.6 per million receive treatment, but Oxford only treats 44.3, and worst of all Merseyside, with only 39.6 per million. The report estimates that a further £250m needs to be spent, double the present sum, to save the lives of kidney patients who are never offered dialysis.

Next week the new annual contracts within the NHS take effect. The Department of Health promised that the report would be published together with new guidelines on the level of renal treatment each health authority should purchase. But instead the report was sent to the Treasury where it has stayed conveniently for 18 months, now too late for this year's contracts.

Successive health ministers have said different things about this report. Tom Sackville wrote to the National Kidney Federation in March last year, saying that it was his department's "firm intention to publish this in good time to influence purchasers in the next contracting round". The time had changed, however, by last July when John Birt told the Commons: "The renal review was an internal review for the Department of Health and it has not been issued for formal consultation. Ministers are currently considering it." A few weeks ago another health minister, John Hare said: "Although the review was completed some time ago, it has



POLLY TOYNEE

In Europe only Bulgaria dialyses fewer people per head of population

taken a considerable time to consider all its implications."

The mounting strain on some hospitals means some patients are being turned away, referred to other equally full units. Some consultants are advising patients to turn up in accident and emergency in acute renal failure, forcing the hospital to take them in. Some units have cut down dialysis treatments from three times a week to twice, weakening their patients. Just one typical example: Dr Leslie Sellers, renal specialist at Hull Royal Infirmary, had an emergency management meeting last week which decided no new patients could be taken on. Renal failure cases will be "redirected" to already over-stretched units in Sheffield or Leeds. "Health authorities don't realise that we are getting more and more patients every year," he says.

But those 1,000 or more who die are

those who never reach the specialist units, never referred by local doctors. Many are over 60, which these days hardly counts as old age. Once kidney failure sets in, they will last only about three weeks. Professor John Walls, president of the Renal Association, which has been lobbying ministers, says, "Renal disease can be non-descript, with flu-like symptoms, so people may never know they had it. There is a huge discrepancy in services, and those who don't live near a unit are not likely to be referred for dialysis."

David Poulter, chairman of the National Kidney Federation, says, "There is no waiting list for total renal failure. They are dead." He adds, "It is not a pleasant way to die. Unable to get rid of water from the body, your lungs fill up and you drown." The death certificate calls it pneumonia.

Professor Stewart Cameron, a member of the committee that drew up the unpublished report, stresses that they were conservative in assessing how many more people would benefit from dialysis. "It can be a great mistake to dialyse everyone. If someone has severe other complications, or if Alzheimer's sets in you can wish you had never started."

But dialysis is no treat, living forever on a strict diet with only a litre of fluid a day. It deeply disrupts normal life and not surprisingly, dialysis patients have a suicide rate 14 times higher than average. On the other hand, those who have had a kidney transplant suffer no greater suicide rate. More than a third of those on dialysis are waiting for a kidney but the waiting list grows year by year, currently at 5,285. Fewer road accidents

and better treatment for brain injury means fewer donors. The hope is that kidneys from genetically engineered pigs may offer the solution, but if that does become safe and routine, it will still be a few years ahead.

The British Medical Association and British Transplant Society has called for a change in the law that could yield many more organs. If dying patients could be put on to ventilators to keep their organs usable, twice as many kidneys might be made available. The Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital started to ask families if they could ventilate likely donors as soon as they had stopped breathing naturally, and they doubled the number of donors as a result. But the Department of Health warned that doctors could be charged with criminal assault for giving a patient treatment not designed to be of value to him, so it was stopped. A change in that law would make huge inroads into the waiting list.

Saving another 1,000 people will be expensive. Patients are much cheaper dead, since dialysis costs £20,000 a year per patient. But if this law on ventilating donors were reformed it could save a great deal of money, for a transplant costs £15,000, plus only £3,000 a year in drugs thereafter.

Some doctors are beginning to advocate an even more radical solution, though politicians are likely to be too squeamish to adopt it. There is no convincing ethical reason why living people should not be allowed to sell their kidneys on the open market, a move that would certainly end the waiting list altogether. But if no one dares grasp this uncomfortable idea, then ventilating the dead is a far better option.

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business

Company results and bets on the next rates move continue to dominate

Company results should continue to dominate the stock market this week although with the Bundesbank in session on Thursday interest rate considerations, which have tended to fade into the background, could again influence proceedings.

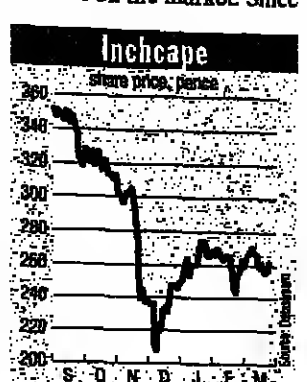
Blue chips, partly on political uncertainties, have lost much of their exuberance during the current results season but there is no doubt that the deluge of figures has generally been at the upper end of expectations.

The underlying firmness of the market and its satisfaction with the run of results is reflected in the performance of second-line shares, the 250 equities tracking in the shadow of the 100 blue chips.

Whereas the blue chip index, the FTSE 100, is some distance from its peak the supporting index has been persistently hitting new highs.

There must be a possibility that as Thursday approaches speculation could mount about a German interest rate cut. And should the Germans, as some suspect, nudge rates lower the market will see pressure developing on the UK authorities for a further reduction.

Corporate activity and share buy-backs are two other big influences on the market. Since



the £3.9bn fast and furious battle between Granada and Forté there has, to the surprise of most observers, been little takeover activity. Trafalgar House has fallen for £900m to Kvaerner, the Norwegian group, and South West Water has attracted the attention, but as yet no bids, of Severn Trent and Wessex Water.

Still in the market, as far as bids are concerned, hope springs eternal. Ladbroke Group remains the punters' favourite, with Cable & Wireless and an array of electric and water utilities not far behind.

Share buy-backs – an admission that a company is short of ideas on how to spend its cash – are a regular feature of market life. Guinness, the brewing and distilling giant, demonstrated the habit was alive and well on Friday when it splashed out £463m on 100 million shares.

Among the more intriguing results due this week are Lachapelle and Kingfisher. Incheape, largely because of the strength of the Japanese yen and the problems of the car industry, has had a depressing time. Its shares, 262p on Friday, were 623p three years ago. Profits were £271.4m in 1993. Today the new chairman, Sir Colin Marshall, is expected to show profits of £140m which could be hit by exceptional items.



STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

if Incheape can outline what it intends to do with the cash saved," it says.

Kingfisher, reporting on Wednesday, is expected to demonstrate that Sir Geoff Mulcahy, chief executive, has delivered his promise to avoid the disastrous mistakes of 1994 when Kingfisher had the dubious distinction of being the worst-performing blue chip. Profits will not be devoid of growth this year; £275m against £244.2m is likely.

Do-it-yourself is Kingfisher's big problem. Like others in this once booming corner of the retail market it has found the going exceedingly tough with profits under intense pressure.

Next, another entry for Thursday, should, by contrast, produce another set of splendid figures, say a 20 per cent gain to £123m.

The market expects P&O, reporting tomorrow, to accompany what will be uninspiring figures with details of disposals. Perhaps Bovis, the group's building off-shoot, will be sold.

P&O's cross-channel ferries are clearly feeling the pinch and its container business is under pressure. But cruising is one area where P&O should be prospering. Profits are likely to come in at around £305m against £341.4m.

Barratt Developments on Wednesday should show that housebuilders can still lift profits, even when their market is

deeply depressed. Sir Geoff will use the occasion of the group's results to announce some sweeping changes at B&Q, its DIY off-shoot.

Taylor Woodrow tomorrow will also push profits ahead, perhaps producing £48.5m against £42.8m. But a sharp profits fall is signalled at Caradon, the building products and security printing group, and £155m is possible against £201.2m when it reports on Wednesday.

Wm Morrison, the supermarket chain with a profit date on Thursday, has attracted sell advice from NatWest and Greig Middleton. NatWest expects profits of £125.3m against £116.1m. Greig £126.4m.

Alexon, the clothing group, should swing back into the black today with profits of £2m perhaps £4m is in sight this year.

Queens Moat Houses, the hotel group that was almost overwhelmed by debts, should

provide further evidence of recovery on Thursday. Although it is expected to make another loss, it will be about £4.5m against £64.1m last time. The hotel industry has so far managed to shrug off the impact of IRA bombing and continue its recovery from the recession that devastated so many companies a few years ago. There are hopes OMH should be in profit this year.

Shares of the group, valued at £80m against nearly £1bn at its peak, have been firm on hopes of a trading recovery and corporate action with the reclusive Barclay brothers mentioned as possible predators.

Manchester United, one of five quoted football clubs, kicks in with figures tomorrow. But the market could be more interested in the football club's television ambitions. Profits could surge to nearly £19m, against the £10.8m produced last time.

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Alcoholic Beverages

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100
Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100
Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100
Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100
Adnoca	1.10	0.00	100	100

Banks, Merchant

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100

Banks, Retail

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Breweries, Pubs & Rest

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Building/Construction

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Building Materials

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Chemicals

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Diversified Industrials

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100

Electricity

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Electronics

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Engineering

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Engineering Vehicles

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Extractive Industries

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Food Manufacturers

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Gas Distribution

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Health Care

Stock	Price	Chg	Vol	Index
Barclays	1.10	0.00	100	100
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Mackay ousted at Inchcape

NIGEL COPE

Sir Colin Marshall, the recently appointed chairman of Inchcape, the troubled car distributor, will today respond to institutional pressure for boardroom change at the company by ousting its chief executive, Charles Mackay.

He will be replaced by Philip Cushing, who was promoted to managing director last year, a shift that marginalised Mr Mackay's position.

Mr Mackay, 56, has been chief executive since 1991 and will be in line for compensation of around £750,000. He also owns shares worth £147,000 and options worth £150,000.

Sir Colin will make the announcement alongside a slump in the company's full-year profits from £22.8m to £14m and a possible cut in the dividend. He is also expected to announce a timetable for the flotation of Bain Hogg, Inchcape's insurance subsidiary. The company yesterday declined to comment on any of the changes.

Mr Mackay's departure has been seen as inevitable given the company's weak performance. As the world's largest distributor of Japanese cars, including Toyota and Mazda, the company has been hit by the recession and the rise of the yen. It has issued a string of profits warnings in the last three years during which the share price has plunged from more than 600p in 1993 to 262p. In December the company was demoted from the FT-SE 100 index of leading shares.

This followed surveys which

showed that fund managers were beginning to voice discontent about the way the company was being run. It was criticised for an unclear strategy and poor communication with the City.

The decision to remove Mr Mackay will have been made more difficult for Sir Colin, the former British Airways chief executive, as the two are good friends. Sir Colin invited Mr Mackay on to the BA board in 1993. Both are non-executives of HSBC, the banking group. Mr Mackay is the third director to leave the board in the last seven months. Last July, David John, the head of Inchcape's world-wide Toyota business, quit to join BOC, the gases group. A month later chairman Sir David Plaistow stepped down earlier than expected. It was thought that institutional shareholders were putting pressure on the company to shake up its management.

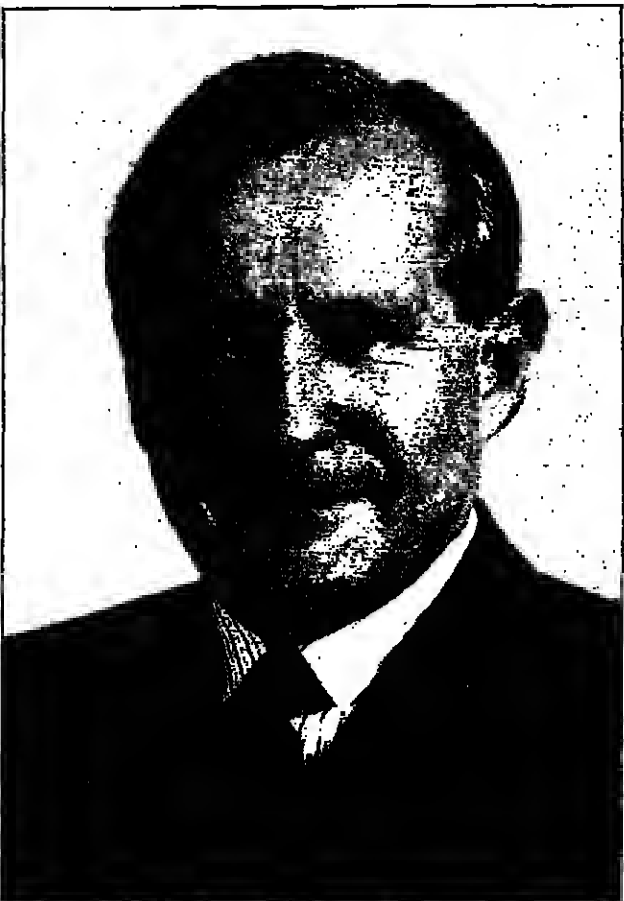
Mr Cushing, 45, joined Inchcape in 1990 after spells with Norros, Lego and Norton Opax, where he was chief executive. He was initially responsible for Inchcape's Singapore operations and was promoted to the board in 1992.

His subsequent promotion to managing director a year ago made him responsible for the day-to-day running of the £1.4bn company while Mr Mackay was put in charge of strategy.

Mr Cushing was educated at Highgate School in London and later at Cambridge where he gained a first in economics. In September Inchcape re-



Personal touch: Sir Colin Marshall (left) has yielded to pressure over Charles Mackay despite a close friendship



ported that operating profits for the half-year were 42 per cent down.

It has since announced a series of cost-cutting measures. Around 2,000 jobs have gone and the company decided to move out of its swish central

London head office to a cheaper West London location.

The company is also reducing its exposure to the Japanese economy by building up its distribution network of non-Japanese cars such as Volvo and Jaguar. The flotation of the Bain

Hogg subsidiary is expected to raise around £250m-£260m.

Earlier reports had suggested that Inchcape was keen to sell Bain Hogg but was unable to find a buyer willing to meet its £400m valuation.

If the company does cut the

dividend the City will be looking for details on how the board intends to use the additional funds. The full-year figures are expected to show lower margins in the all-important motors division, with Hong Kong and the UK well down on 1994.

B&Q chief set to be dropped by Kingfisher

Kingfisher is set to announce a management shake-up at B&Q, its under-performing DIY subsidiary, that will see Jim Hodgkinson ousted from his £300,000-a-year position as head of the group's home improvements business, writes Nigel Cope.

The decision is expected to be finalised before the group's full-year results on Wednesday which will show that profits at B&Q slumped 30 per cent last year from £83m to £55m.

Sir Geoff Mulcahy, chief executive, has become alarmed at the poor performance at B&Q, once the driving force of Kingfisher's growth but now its chief problem area.

His view is that Mr Hodgkinson and his management team have spent too much time opening new stores and not enough on getting the existing stores right.

The expansion of the huge Warehouse store format will be reined back. This will please analysts who have been concerned that the huge superstores were grabbing sales from the standard-size B&Qs.

Sir Geoff has been spending an increasing amount of time at the B&Q head office trying to sort out the problems. He has been critical of poor planning, of staffing levels, poor product layout and high levels of shop shrinkage, or theft.

Mr Hodgkinson, 52, was on a two-year contract and will

therefore be in line for compensation of up to £600,000. He also holds share options worth almost £200,000.

Already a multi-millionaire from his early days at B&Q, Mr Hodgkinson has been with the company since 1972, though he left in 1994 to spend a year in the US at Home Depot, the DIY giant.

It is thought that Sir Geoff has decided Mr Hodgkinson's entrepreneurial skills are better suited to an expansionary strategy rather than the cost-conscious approach now necessary.

The most likely internal candidate to succeed Mr Hodgkinson is his deputy, Martin Toogood, though an external candidate is possible.

Mr Hodgkinson will be the fifth director to leave the Kingfisher board since it announced a profits warning last January. A year ago the company axed four directors including then chief executive Alan Smith and finance director James Kerr.

Mr Toogood has compensation payments totalling £2.75m.

Sir Nigel Mobbs has also retired as chairman and has been replaced by Sir John Banham, former director general of the CBI.

City analysts expect Kingfisher to announce a small decline in its group profits to around £275m on Wednesday, although Woolworths is expected to have performed strongly.

Non-execs press for Guinness demerger

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Non-executive directors at Guinness, the spirits and brewing giant, are stepping up pressure for a demerger to unlock shareholder value from the group's otherwise lacklustre performance. Last week's £460m share buy-back, the day after disappointing 1995 results, is regarded by some non-execs as little more than a holding operation pending a more radical move.

Attention has focused on Bernard Arnault, chairman and chief executive of LVMH, the French luxury goods and drinks business, and Guinness's principal shareholder with 21 per cent as the prime instigator of demerger pressure.

But sources close to the French businessman said that, far from conducting a lone campaign, there was support among other non-execs in what appears to be the beginnings of a boardroom split.

The board has conceded that the demerger option has been formally discussed, and that it was not quashed. It is common knowledge in the City that merchant banks are touting demerger proposals to a number of groups considered prime targets, among which Guinness is high on the list.

Having hit a peak of 635p in 1992, Guinness shares have substantially underperformed the FT-SE 100 index. They ended last week at 466p.

Mr Arnault, whose stake is currently worth about £2bn, is believed to have emphasised that he is a long-term holder of the shares, but that he wants to see greater value.

Anthony Greener, Guinness's chairman, is known to be opposed to the demerger idea, underscoring the value of the core business and focus, and the synergies to be enjoyed between the beer and spirits divisions.

Oftel toughens stance on BT

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

BT faces a fresh round of controversy over plans by the watchdog, Oftel, to acquire far-reaching new powers against anti-competitive practices. The regulator is understood to be toughening its stance on potential abuse by BT of its market position and, unless the company agrees the changes, the matter will be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Don Cruickshank, director-general of Oftel, is expected within weeks to issue a document setting out plans for a general condition in BT's licence and those of its rivals that would enable him to pinpoint anti-competitive behaviour and order it to stop while an investigation is conducted. It would replace the complex and growing series of individual licence conditions relating to competition. Equally important from

the point of view of BT's rivals, it would end a situation in which alleged anti-competitive behaviour can continue until the case is proven.

Oftel has been consulting on the proposals for months and BT has been lobbying fiercely for them to be watered down. In particular, the company has complained that one individual - Mr Cruickshank and his successors - would have sweeping powers as judge, jury and executioner and that BT would have insufficient right of appeal.

Industry sources say that Mr

Cruickshank, far from being swayed by BT's arguments, has dug his heels in. He believes that as BT provides an ever-greater range of services as well as owning and operating the network, there has to be a solid competition framework to protect BT's customers and rival service providers. Sources at Oftel have also pointed out that the proposed sanctions against abuse of power are little different from those that BT would like to see in place in other countries where it operates, or plans to do so.

Cable & Wireless is hurtling towards its own end-of-March deadline for appointing a new chief executive amid mounting speculation that the company will succumb to a merger with BT.

BT has refused to comment on the issue, but City sources say the group remains determined to snap up C&W. City sources believe BT approached its rival at the end of last year, shortly after C&W was plunged into turmoil with the abrupt departure of Lord Young, its chairman, and James Ross, chief executive. The shortlist for the chief executive role at C&W is thought to include Joe Natchio, a high-flyer at AT&T. But there is also a view that the search has ground to a halt because of the rumours about BT.

BAe likely to cut Airbus stake if restructuring goes ahead

PETER RODGERS
and RUSSELL HOTTEN

British Aerospace is likely to reduce its stake in Airbus Industrie if it wins its battle to turn the plane-building consortium into a separately incorporated group instead of a partnership.

Pressure to reform the structure of Airbus is mounting, following threats last week from the German government to withhold subsidies for the development of the partnership's next aircraft unless it begins a reorganisation.

Under the present arrangements, work is shared by members of Airbus according to their participation. This has been criticised by the UK and Germany as inefficient. France, the third member of the partnership - through the Aerospace group - is resisting change. Britain and Germany want Airbus turned into a conven-

tional company with managerial freedom to make decisions about cost cuts without referring back to the partners at every move.

British Aerospace sources dismissed press speculation that it would be seeking an increase in its present 20 per cent stake if Airbus is restructured.

The main reason is that new shareholders may need to be invited to join Airbus if it is incorporated and a reduction in the stakes of the existing partners - BAe has 20 per cent - would be necessary to accommodate this.

The pressure for restructuring goes hand in hand with Airbus's plans to build a new super-jumbo, the 550-seater A3XX, costing £5bn. The existing partners will be unable to raise the capital, the reason they are talking of bringing further partners into the consortium. The likeliest candidates are

organisations from Asia and the Pacific Rim, where growth of airline orders is expected to be strongest over the next 20 years. Companies from Taiwan, South Korea and China are thought to be the most likely to join.

Boeing's authoritative annual survey of the airline market earlier this month estimated that airlines will spend \$1,100bn buying about 16,000 aircraft over the next 20 years. The bulk of the demand will come from Asia-Pacific.

If Airbus becomes a separately incorporated company it will have more freedom to buy components from the most economic sources.

However, the underlying problem stalling a restructuring is that Aérospatiale, the state-owned French member of the grouping, is the least efficient and would lose most heavily from a move away from work-sharing.

Railtrack share campaign begins with £1.8bn hopes

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

The advertising campaign to market shares in Railtrack, which owns Britain's railway lines, gets under way tomorrow, as expectations of the likely price edge up to more than £1.8bn. This compares with earlier estimates that Railtrack would fetch no more than £1.5bn because of uncertainty about its earnings record and about the impact of Labour policy on the privatised company.

Last week there were signs that Labour was softening its policy of maintaining a publicly owned and accountable railway, as evidence mounts that the sale programme is well past the point of no return.

The chances of Labour renationalising Railtrack or taking control by a back door appear to be receding rapidly.

The Railtrack sale, due in May with the pathfinder prospectus to be published next

month, will take privatisation the halfway mark, measured by turnover, and the Government is making strenuous efforts to remind potential investors of how far it has got.

With a third of the rail industry - £3bn by turnover in 42 businesses - already transferred to the private sector, Railtrack will take the total privatised turnover to more than £5bn.

The Government has sold franchises covering 70 per cent of the passenger services, by revenue, and another 30 per cent is on the market. It has also raised £1.8bn in cash by selling the three rolling stock leasing companies.

Six infrastructure maintenance and track renewal companies have been sold, as well as six heavy maintenance depots and a large number of other smaller companies including 12 central services businesses.

Final bids for Freightliner are in, and the sale is due shortly, while Red Star, Rail Express

Systems and the trainload freight companies have been sold.

Advisers are aiming to sell 30 per cent of Railtrack - about £600m of shares - to private investors, but there is no upper limit and if the marketing campaign goes well the proportion could reach 40 per cent.

The campaign is not seeking out a mass market for Railtrack shares because of the relatively small size of the privatisation. When Railtrack is quoted it will fall at the bottom end of the FT-SE 100 and may be outside it.

The television and newspaper advertising campaign will feature pictures of railways lines alone, without trains running on them, to avoid misleading the public into thinking that Railtrack shares represent an investment in trains. Railtrack is an infrastructure company that charges rail operators for the use of its track. Presentations to institutional investors have been under way for some time.

IN BRIEF

• Although an overwhelming 79 per cent of British companies say they regard training as a priority only 8 per cent set aside any budget for it, according to research by Lloyds Bank's small business research trust. It showed that nearly half of UK manufacturing and 40 per cent of business service firms claim to be suffering from skill shortages, but most provide training only when necessary rather than trying to keep abreast of developments and techniques.

• Well over two-thirds of small- and medium-sized businesses in Britain believe the introduction of an EU-directed minimum wage would have no effect on their workforce levels, according to a survey by 3i, the venture capital group. Half of the entrepreneurs and owner-managers of these classes of business see the EU as an opportunity, with only 8 per cent considering it a threat. Opinion is split down the middle on a single currency, with 37 per cent in favour and 36 per cent against.

• John Duffield, chairman of Jupiter Asset Management, the fund manager owned by Commerzbank of Germany, has called in independent lawyers and accountants to investigate the way the business is run following press allegations about the handling of client funds. He said the reports had been commissioned with the aim of clearing Jupiter's name, and would be made available to the City watchdog, Imro.

• The Serious Fraud Office is negotiating with the Home Office to be given greater control of the police officers assigned to it, with the ultimate aim of having a dedicated police force. The effectiveness of combating high-profile fraud has in the past been undermined by sometimes difficult relations between the police and the SFO. George Staple, the SFO's director, said a way must be found of giving him the ability to give directions to the police assigned to him.

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GAVYN DAVIES

'On launch day, the European Central Bank will formally become responsible for monetary and exchange rate policy; the euro will become a currency in its own right; and exchange rates will be totally fixed against the euro'

Living with the euro: the user's guide to 1999

At a European summit in two years - scheduled to take place in Britain of all places - the first set of full participants in economic and monetary union will be determined.

Financial markets are already becoming highly exercised about this. However, if my experience is anything to go by, the main focus so far has been on what will happen before the start date. It is time to focus on what life will be like after 1999. Here are some pertinent questions and answers.

When will the single currency be launched?
Assuming the Maastricht timetable sticks, the intention is to launch the euro on 1 January 1999. However, there has been increasing talk of a "technical delay" or of "stopping the clock at one minute to midnight". Either device might be used to delay the launch date for up to a year, while continuing to proceed under the umbrella of Maastricht. On launch day, the European Central Bank will formally become responsible for monetary and exchange rate policy; the euro will become a currency in its own right; and exchange rates will be totally fixed against the euro within the EMU group.

So domestic currencies such as the mark will continue to exist? Up to a point. Although many transactions will continue to be denominated in marks, francs etc, and although these national currencies will continue to circulate in the form of notes and coins, they will no longer be genuine independent currencies.

They will be freely interchangeable in infinite quantities at fixed rates against the euro and will, in theory, simply be different names for the same currency, the euro. There will be no "big bang". The euro will develop its role at different speeds in different markets until July 2002, when all other currencies will be finally withdrawn.

Isn't the interim period just like the old ERM? No, it is not. Under the old ERM, national currencies remained the responsibility of the national central banks, even though they were linked together (within 2.25 per cent margins) against each other.

There was no supranational organisation that guaranteed to intervene without limit to keep the currencies totally fixed against each other. In particular, when there was a speculative rush into marks, the Bundesbank often failed to sell enough marks in the foreign exchange markets to keep the exchange rates fixed. This was because such operations would have increased the German money supply - not acceptable to the Bundesbank. Eventually, this precipitated the break-up of the system.

Isn't there a risk that the Bundesbank will act the same way under EMU? No, because it will not be allowed to. The Bundesbank will have no control over monetary policy in Germany, and will be able to issue marks only under the authorisation of the ECB. It will therefore become nothing more than an operating arm of the ECB.

If there is a speculative rush into marks and out of euros or francs, the ECB will simply order the issue of an infinite number of marks until the speculation stops.

Does that mean the system cannot break up? In theory, the system cannot break up. And in practice, it is far less likely to break up than the old ERM. But we cannot be absolutely certain of its durability. For example, if people think that there is a risk of a future German government pulling out of the system, and re-establishing the mark as an appreciating currency in its own right, they may choose to hold marks in preference to either francs or euros in the early stages, just in case.

This would cause problems, since the money supply in Germany would then increase sharply, and that in France would diminish.

This could cause loud political complaints about inflationary forces in Germany and about recessionary forces in France. And the fact that the system lacked absolute credibility with either markets or politicians could potentially cause such currency shifts to snowball.

How could this be controlled? The EU hopes that the problem would never arise in the first place.

If they pick the right exchange rates at the start (not necessarily the present ones, which of course raises another problem of how and when to set the right rates), and if

they convince people that they will always provide enough marks for euros to keep the exchange rates totally fixed, sizeable speculation against the parties may never occur. But if it does, they will allow the interest rate on the mark to fall below that on the franc and euro, thus discouraging people from holding too many marks.

But you said that there would be a single monetary policy? How can there be more than one interest rate? Good point.

The ECB will conduct all of its internal monetary policy interventions in euros, and hope that the interest rates on marks and francs will be almost exactly equal to those on the euro.

But if the markets believe there is a risk of a future change in the exchange rates, they will force interest rates to diverge between the mark and franc to compensate them for this risk, and there is nothing the ECB can do to prevent this.

Of course, such interest rate divergences will be highly inconvenient to say the least, since they may be directly the opposite of what the French and German economies need in terms of monetary policy.

So you think the system could end in disaster after all? It is not very likely, provided that the initial launch is at the right exchange rates, and provided it commands wide political consent from all members.

But if the launch is rushed, a subsequent bust-up is certainly a possibility, at least in

the period when marks and francs are circulating alongside the euro.

Since the system could be broken up, does that mean a decision to join is reversible? Technically, a member state could choose to opt out fairly easily, at least up to 2002, when its own currency denominations would still be circulating in people's pockets, and in bank accounts. After that, with the euro holding a monopoly inside the EMU, it would be harder to withdraw, but still technically feasible. The trouble is that the knowledge that a sovereign government could one day withdraw would always prevent the system from attaining absolute credibility. It would be a potential fault line in the system.

What can be done to enhance credibility? The most obvious thing would be to completely withdraw all the domestic currency units (marks, francs, etc) immediately in 1999. But this has been strongly opposed by the Germans, probably because they fear that the early withdrawal of the mark would not be acceptable to the German electorate. So instead they prefer to proceed by stealth, leaving the mark in people's pockets to prevent a political furor, even though they know that control over monetary policy will be immediately ceded by the Bundesbank.

Isn't that a bit sneaky? Yes, very sneaky. But even the most ardent supporters of EMU think it would be difficult to sell the concept to the German electorate if they really knew what was going on.

A philosopher in the home of the brash

Salomon Brothers has always had a name for being a damned good trader, but only that. Its new European chief has plans to take it further

Beating about the bush is not a trait of Peter Middleton. "Our ambition has to be, by the year 2000, to be one of the top three houses in Europe across the investment banking board."

Tough talking given that, of the four Wall Street behemoths, Salomon Brothers is by far the least known for investment banking expertise, and faces in Europe some impressive home-grown competitors with global ambitions of their own.

It is also a push, those with longish City memories would rector, that Salomon has made before, and more than once, and never stuck it out. They are traders, damned good traders, but traders they will always be.

But Mr Middleton, having had time to get his feet under the desk since his surprise appointment last November as chief executive of Salomon's European business, is convinced the world is in for a surprise. Those who still think of Salomon Brothers as essentially bond traders and risk-takers must think again, he says.

The buzz is client relationships, equities and banking. It only takes a trip up the long escalator to Salomon's European headquarters above Victoria station in London to appreciate the physical dimensions of the massive expansion under way. The once cavernous atrium is being sliced away to create new floors of offices for the bankers. Several tens of millions of dollars have been budgeted to be spent each year for the next five years on a hiring and development programme aimed at transforming Salomon Brothers' profile in the City.

"The fact that our investment banking is not seen as a real powerhouse is one of the things motivating us," says Mr Mid-

Having been very much a proprietary trading operation, Salomon's claims to be undergoing a "total switch" in terms of equities, focusing on agency and secondary market activities, while building up the bank.

"Our approach is to hire just one or two high-quality investment bankers for each country in Europe and then develop a strategy with them," Mr Middleton says. "The next stage is close integration between Europe and the US in terms of combined teams calling on clients."

THE MONDAY INTERVIEW PETER MIDDLETON

The expansion has been all the easier, Mr Middleton readily admits, because of the "opportunities in the difficulties of some of our competitors". But Salomon's poaching is only in the early stages. The bank's sales and talent among the City's top ranks - already considerable thanks to the ambitions notably of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, UBS, too, is girding itself for a big investment banking push.

"The big change here for Salomon is the number of talented people who want to join us. Eighteen months ago, many of them would probably not have considered it."

Salomon is certainly a big change for Mr Middleton. By reputation, it is quintessentially American, harsh and halcy. This is a far cry from his beginnings of adulthood in a monastery, followed by reading philosophy at the University of Paris. It is also a rather different career lane from the true-Brit one occupied until now the Foreign Office, Midland Bank, Thomas Cook and finally Lloyd's of London.

But one of the surprises, says Mr Middleton, apart from finding that Salomon people do not eat live children for breakfast, is that the London operation could hardly be less American. "In the course of every working day, I am likely to hear 14 or 15 languages being spoken. One of the better-kept secrets of Salomon is that in Europe it is so European. There are 35 nationalities in this part of the operation."

When the New York board headhunted Mr Middleton, they wanted a European, and they wanted a professional manager who could help bring a consistency of approach to the business that had been so absent in the past.

"In the Eighties, as a bond trader as Salomon essentially was, there was no medium- to long-term client strategy. The emphasis is moving more towards the client relationship side of the business."

Mr Middleton sees his urgent priorities as getting the various product areas of the business operating much more coherently together, and training managers to manage. On a recent trip to a big banking client in Düsseldorf, he was surprised to find that his German counterpart knew much more about the different services from Salomon Brothers than Mr Middleton himself.

"Just in the past three months, there is a greater sense of the need to co-operate among product areas," he says. "None of this is complicated

stuff, but it does make a difference between a firm that has a lot of individual talent firing away, and a coherent team that is powerful because united."

He is also putting emphasis on developing people and training to make them better at what they do. "We have tended in the past to put people in a seat and say, right, you are in such and such a product area, start phoning clients. We need to train people on how to manage client relationships."

Senior executives have regular business planning meetings, focusing on where they want to be 18 months from now, and they are all expected to take a period of training each year.

"That is how you link management with profit, not just by removing inefficiencies, but by getting people with training to be better."

He adds: "One of the reasons why there is a need for management skills in institutions like this is precisely because you do have to try to bind people to a company by factors other than money."

In advocating change, Mr Middleton is pushing on doors already well opened by the trauma of the bond trading scandal in 1991. At the time, Salomon Brothers was being urged to give up on equities and banking and out back to its bond trading roots.

But the new management, under Deryck Maughan, another English Northerner like Mr Middleton, took the other course, trying to broaden the base of the business, and transforming the "big swinging dick" culture portrayed by Michael Lewis in the book *Liar's Poker*. "I think a lot of good things came out of the awful trauma of 1991. It was very damaging for Salomon, but it gave people

'I think a lot of good things came out of that awful trauma of 1991'

the occasion to stand back and say, not just that it would never happen again, but we are sure that the products and the emphasis of the business is the best for the future."

"Deryck Maughan brought a lot of fresh thinking. Quite certainly, until that point, the trading side in New York had dominated the firm."

"A big change is that there is no longer the internal arrogance that used to characterise Salomon Brothers. There were some people who were viewed, and viewed themselves, as bigger than the firm."

"That gives you a problem in management terms, because if you elevate people on to pedestals that high, normal ways of controlling them, internal audit, compliance, may not be able to get to that level to see what is really going on," Mr Middleton says.

"The real transformation is that there is no appetite for a return to that culture."

John Eisenhammer



Advocate for change: Peter Middleton is pushing on doors already opened by the bond trading scandal in 1991

Photograph: Edward Webb

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SCIENCE

When ignorance is bliss

For the past decade and a half, scientists around the world have been combing through human DNA looking for the causes of inherited diseases such as cystic fibrosis and Huntington's disease. The idea was that people at risk of such conditions would want to take a genetic test.

But the researchers' expectations have been confounded. People are queuing up not to be tested. Last week, at a meeting in Cambridge, held in a room adjacent to the one where in 1953 James Watson and Francis Crick discovered the DNA double helix, the realisation gradually dawned that delivering genetic medicine to patients in the hospital clinics may prove a more difficult task than Watson and Crick's original discovery.

Most people at risk of genetic illness are refusing to have DNA tests. Tom Wilkie examines the facts that are confounding scientists

The disease. But because it only "kicks in" comparatively late - around 40 or later - someone at risk has no means of knowing for sure. If they do develop the disease they may then have had children themselves. Their children in turn will have a 50:50 risk of disease.

When the gene was discovered in 1993, Dr Jo Green of the university's Centre for Family Research told last week's meeting, genetics researchers assumed there would be a high demand for the test developed shortly afterwards. "But only a minority of those at risk came forward for testing, around 10 per cent," Dr Green said. Although the condition is inherited equally by both sexes, more women than men came forward for testing.

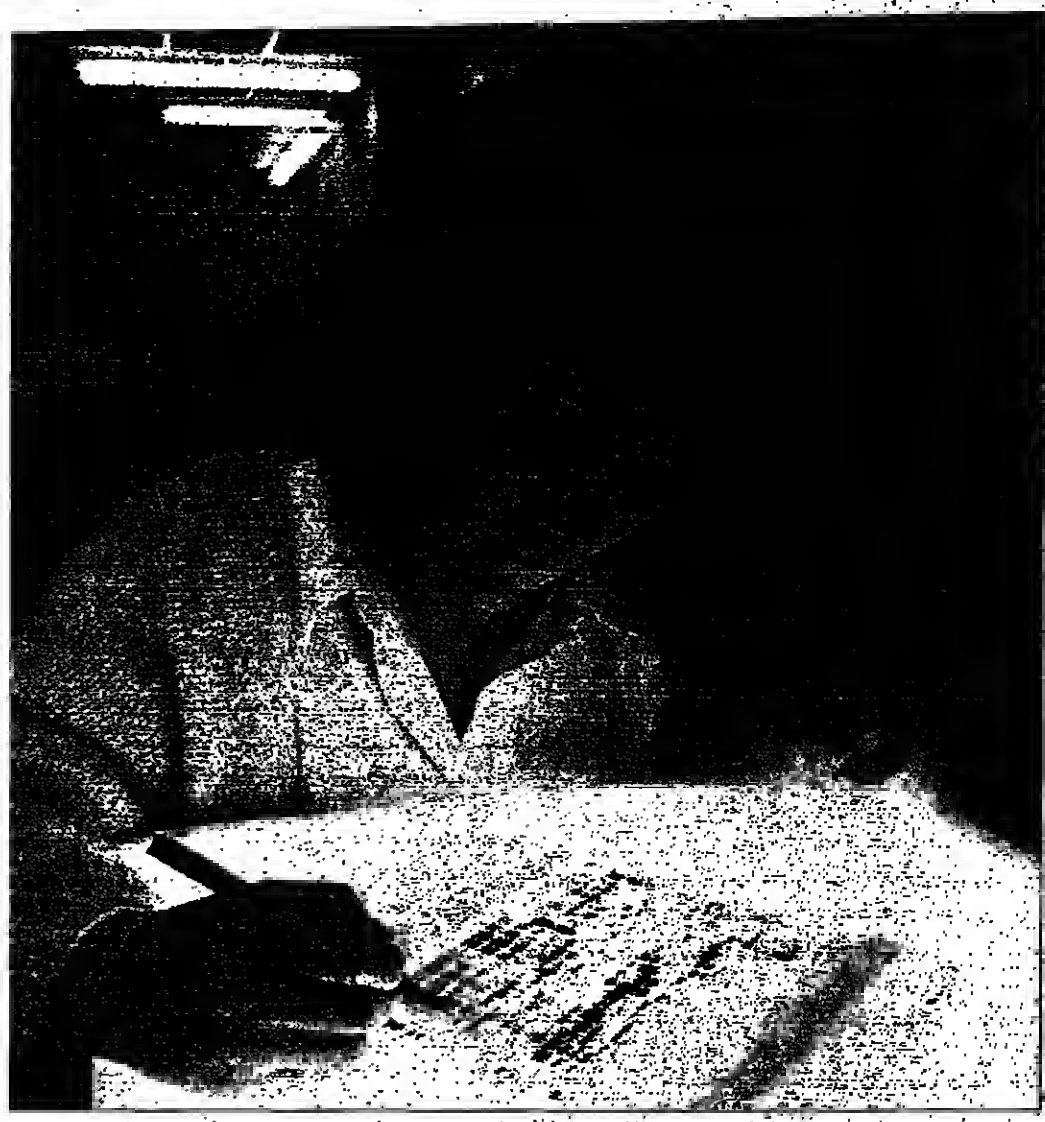
population". There was a higher uptake of the test among women in antenatal clinics, but that may simply be a matter of the setting - where all manner of tests are being offered anyway and the CF test can be taken on the spot without the need to return for another appointment - rather than reflecting any real demand by the women themselves.

"The implementation of carrier testing has stalled in the UK and the US," Professor Marteau said. Among those tested, "over time, there was a loss of understanding of individuals' carrier status. More counselling at the time of testing is not the answer."

The Government's response to these problems has been confused and uncertain. In January, it announced the setting up of a small advisory committee. But its remit is so narrow that the committee is unlikely even to touch the issues discussed at Cambridge - the very issues that may determine whether genetic tests, developed with the best of intentions, help or harm those families most vulnerable to genetic disease.

The Troubled Helix - Social and Psychological Implications of the New Human Genetics, edited by Theresa Marteau and Martin Richards, Cambridge University Press.

Gene testing: high technology but low uptake
Photograph: Rex Features



There's an action-packed drama in the heavens this month. Even as you read this, Comet Hyakutake is skimming past the Earth, far closer than any other heavenly body except the Moon, in a celestial show that will continue through to the end of April. It's joined by a dazzling appearance from Venus - a one-night special - a total eclipse of the Moon.

Prepare yourself for a once-in-a-lifetime spectacle

April will see a total lunar eclipse and the passing of a new comet, report Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest

move gradually. The chart shows just where to find Hyakutake at 10pm each evening.

This comet could be the brightest for 20 years. Astronomers can predict exactly "where" comets will be, but it's rash to predict how bright they will be. There have been many splendid comet "bops", the most famous being Kohoutek in 1973. Billed as "comet of the century", it was scarcely visible to the naked eye.

Hyakutake should do better. The International Astronomical Union reckons it will reach magnitude 1, matching the first magnitude stars shown as star-symbols on the chart. The British Astronomical Association thinks it could be several times brighter, more brilliant than the brightest star, Sirius.

But don't expect too much from Hyakutake. These days, we are treated to firework displays and laser shows that have given us a heightened expectation of what a celestial display should look like. There may not be much of a tail this week, either, so Hyakutake will look more like

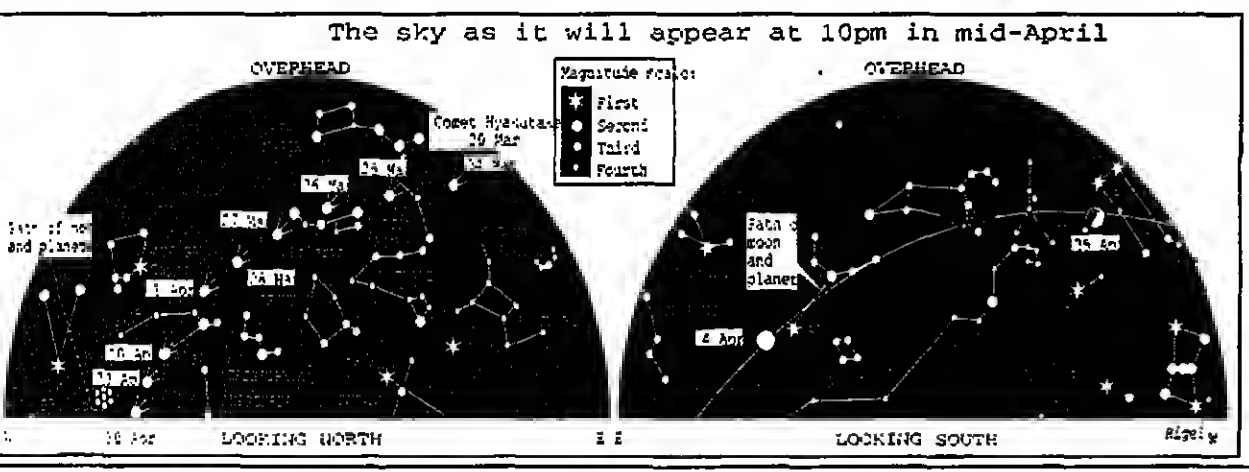
a fuzzy ball than most people's idea of a comet. And it is passing so close that its light is spread out into a patch several degrees across. The slightest illumination from streetlights will drown Hyakutake. So make every effort to get to a dark site. As we move into April, the Moon comes round to full; you'll need to wait until the Moon has set to see the comet at its best.

If you have a clear north-western horizon, you can witness a once-in-a-lifetime event on the night of 3-4 April. The full Moon will drown out the comet, but as the Moon enters eclipse (see below), the sky will darken and the comet will seem to appear out of nowhere.

and Mars are too close to the Sun to be seen this month. Around 21 April we'll be treated to shooting stars radiating outwards from the constellation Lyra. It won't be a meteor storm, though, more a light shower.

Leo dominates the southern sky with Virgo to the lower left. Its brightest star, Spica, lies near to the Moon during the lunar eclipse on 3 April. The bright star above is Arcturus in the constellation Bootes (the herdsman).

Diary (all times BST)
1 April: Venus at greatest eastern elongation.
3-4 April: 11:21pm-1:53am: total eclipse of the Moon 4:10am: full Moon.
11 April, 0:36am: Moon at last quarter.
17 April, 11:48pm: new Moon.
21 April: maximum of Lyrid meteors.
23 April: Mercury at greatest eastern elongation.
25 April, 9:40pm: Moon at first quarter.
Hyakutake on the Internet, Section Two, page 22.



THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

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No. 2943, Monday 25 March

By Peter

1 He speculates endlessly on a road round African city (8)

6 Stage direction put into words (6)

9 Repents of deception we're told (4)

10 Character's eccentric means of communication (6-4)

11 Work over time with expert on a musical genre (5,5)

12 Note returns being taken round mid-September time (4)

13 Many come down channel (5)

14 At last, he's doing a job (9)

16 Make a move to dance? (4,5)

19 Pin money one earns (5)

21 Second-class star (4)

23 No, crime is uncommon on American islands in the Pacific (10)

25 Trouble is I misplaced working gear (6,4)

26 Affair is taking in girl (4)

27 Person who can't be trusted with relief money (6)

28 Type of international show by new European conservation body (8)

DOWN

2 He seizes power held by loan-shark (7)

3 Declare one's against point brought forward (9)

4 Offhand remark? (2,3)

5 Not involved in shooting? (3,2,5,7)

6 Getting on before, ahead of churchman (7)

7 Unstable foundation extended by a yard (5)

8 Become conscious of plane (7)

15 Build up case involving key army personnel (9)

17 Sounds like metal's not all excellent (7)

18 Vocal colour added by novice music producer (7)

20 Issue of civil disorder's a non-starter (7)

22 A cure turned up for Greek guy (5)

24 Proceed to ask for money that's readily available (2,3)

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